BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

3.17 Natural Communities

The analysis of impacts of the MCP project on natural communities is based on the *Natural Environment Study* (NES) (July 2008) the *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* (December 2011), the Mid County Parkway Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis (September 2014) and the Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis Addendum (October 2014) provided in Appendix T of this Final EIR/EIS. This section includes a discussion of natural communities of special concern, habitat fragmentation, wildlife corridors, and habitat conservation plans.

3.17.1 Regulatory Setting

This section of the document discusses natural communities of concern. The focus of this section is on biological communities, not individual plant or animal species. This section also includes information on wildlife corridors and habitat fragmentation. Wildlife corridors are areas of habitat used by wildlife for seasonal or daily migration. Habitat fragmentation involves the potential for dividing sensitive habitat and thereby lessening its biological value.

Habitat areas that have been designated as critical habitat under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) and FHWA's responsibilities for consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the FESA are discussed in Threatened and Endangered Species, Section 3.21. Wetlands and other waters are discussed in Section 3.18.

3.17.1.1 Habitat Conservation Plans, Natural Communities Conservation Plans, and Wildlife Areas

Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) are prepared pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) in order to conserve habitat and receive incidental take[1] permits for take of threatened and endangered fish and wildlife species. The State process of issuing an incidental take[2] permit under the California

[1] "Take" is defined under the FESA as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct."

[2] "Take" is defined by the California Fish and Game Code as "to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill or to attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill."

Endangered Species Act (CESA) can complement the Federal HCP process and may include the same or similar species, depending on their status. As provided in Section 2835 of the California Fish and Game Code, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) may permit the take of any identified species whose conservation and management is provided for in a CDFW-approved Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP). An NCCP identifies and provides for the regional or areawide protection of plants, animals, and their habitats while allowing compatible and appropriate economic activity. Sections 2081(b) and 2081(c) of CESA allow the CDFW to issue an incidental take permit for State-listed threatened and endangered species.

HCPs and NCCPs applicable to the MCP project are the Western Riverside County MSHCP (County of Riverside Transportation and Land Management Agency 2003) and the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat in Western Riverside County (Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency 1996) (Habitat Conservation Plan). These plans are described in the following sections.

Western Riverside County MSHCP

The Western Riverside County MSHCP is a comprehensive, multijurisdictional MSHCP and NCCP. It focuses on the conservation of species and their associated habitats in western Riverside County. The Western Riverside County MSHCP allows its permittees to better control local land use decisions and maintain a strong economic climate in the region while adhering to the requirements of the FESA and the CESA. The Western Riverside County MSHCP allows participating jurisdictions to authorize the "take" of plant and animal species identified in the Western Riverside County MSHCP and found within the boundaries of the Western Riverside County MSHCP Plan Area. Regulation of the "take" of threatened, endangered, and rare species is authorized by the wildlife agencies (the United States Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] and the CDFW). The wildlife agencies allow "Take Authorization" for otherwise lawful actions (e.g., public and private development) in exchange for the assembly and management of a coordinated Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area.

The Western Riverside County MSHCP Plan Area encompasses approximately 1.26 million acres (ac) (1,966 square miles [sq mi]) and includes all unincorporated land in Riverside County west of the crest of the San Jacinto Mountains to the Orange County line, as well as the jurisdictional areas of the Cities of Temecula, Murrieta, Lake Elsinore, Canyon Lake, Norco, Corona, Riverside, Moreno Valley, Banning,

Beaumont, Calimesa, Perris, Hemet, San Jacinto, Menifee, Wildomar, Jurupa Valley, and Eastvale. The Western Riverside County MSHCP Plan Area covers multiple species and habitats within a diverse landscape, from urban centers to undeveloped foothills and montane forests,[1] all under multiple jurisdictions. The Western Riverside County MSHCP Plan Area extends across many bioregions as well, including the Santa Ana Mountains, the Riverside Lowlands, the San Jacinto Foothills, the San Jacinto Mountains, the Agua Tibia Mountains, the Desert Transition, and the San Bernardino Mountains. The goal of the Western Riverside County MSHCP is to provide a coordinated Conservation Area and implementation program to preserve biological diversity and maintain the region's quality of life.

The Biological Study Area (BSA) for the MCP project shown on Figure 3.17.1 crosses only a small part of the approximately 1,966 sq mi Western Riverside County MSHCP Plan Area. Because the Plan Area covers a very large geographic area with multiple species and habitats, it is important to note that not all species and habitats within the Plan Area occur in or near the BSA for the MCP project. The analyses in this EIR/EIS focus on those species and habitats that occur or have the potential to occur in the BSA.

The Conservation Area is assembled from parts of the Western Riverside County MSHCP Criteria Area, which consists of one-quarter-section (i.e., approximately 160 ac) cells, each with specific criteria for conservation requirements. Figure 3.17.1 shows the Western Riverside County MSHCP Core Areas[2] and Linkages[3] within the MCP project area.

The Conservation Area targeted under the Western Riverside County MSHCP, when complete, will total 500,000 ac. Of that, 347,000 ac have already been conserved through the Public/Quasi-Public designation. Public/Quasi-Public lands near the MCP study area, mostly consisting of existing habitat reserves (i.e., Stephens' kangaroo rat

1 Mountain forests. Montane forest begins at about 1,500–2,000 feet (ft) above mean sea level (amsl) and transitions into subalpine forests at about 4,000 ft amsl.

2 "Core Area" is a block of habitat of appropriate size, configuration, and vegetation characteristics to generally support the life history requirements of one or more species covered by the MSHCP.

3 "Linkage" is a connection between Core Areas with adequate size, configuration, and vegetation characteristics to generally provide for "live-in" habitat and/or genetic flow for species.

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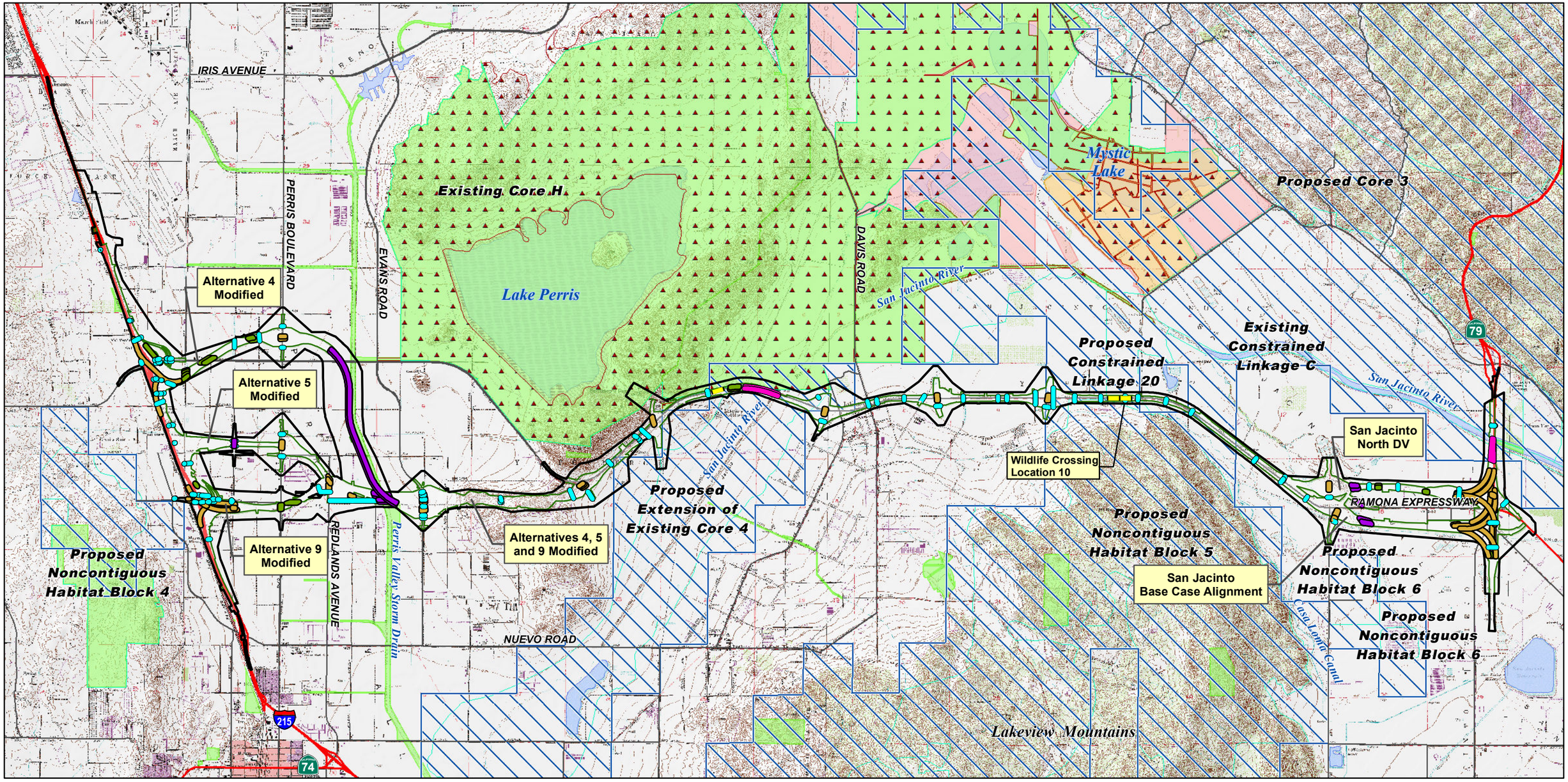

LEGEND

- Biological Study Area
- Limits of Proposed Improvements
- MSHCP Criteria Areas*
- 4 — Alternative(s) Modified

Public and Quasi Public Lands

- Public/Quasi-Public Conserved Lands
- Pre-existing Conservation Agreements
- San Jacinto Wildlife Area Additional Acquisition
- San Jacinto Wildlife Area

Structures Designed for Wildlife Crossing

- Wildlife Undercrossing Structure
- Bridge/Wildlife Crossing

Other Structures

- Bridge (at drainage feature)
- Culvert (at drainage feature)
- Bridge (at local road/terrain crossing)
- Bridge (at System/Service Interchange)

**Cores, Linkages and other Proposed Conservation Areas will be assembled from portions of the Criteria Area.*

SOURCE: Jacobs Engineering (02/2011); USGS 7.5' Quads; County of Riverside (06/2003 and 07/2011)

0 2700 5400 FEET

FIGURE 3.17.1

Western Riverside County MSHCP Public/Quasi-public Lands and Criteria Area

08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

R:\JCV531\G\ModifiedProject\Reports\EIR\fig3-17-1_PQP_CoreLinkage.mxd (11/17/2014)

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reserves) and the San Jacinto Wildlife Area (SJWA) are discussed later in this section. Existing and proposed conservation areas shown on Figure 3.17.1 consist of the lands within the Western Riverside County MSHCP Criteria Area that are contemplated to be assembled for conservation in conjunction with the existing Public/Quasi-Public lands in this area.

As a permittee under the Western Riverside County MSHCP, RCTC is obligated to implement specific conditions, as follows from Section 13.7 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP Implementation Agreement, and to abide by the Section 10(a)(1) permit conditions. As the Western Riverside County MSHCP permittee for the MCP project receiving take coverage under the Western Riverside County MSHCP, RCTC will implement the following specific conditions from the Implementation Agreement:

A. Adopt and maintain ordinances or resolutions as necessary to implement the requirements and to fulfill the purposes of the Permits, the MSHCP and this Agreement, for its Covered Activities. Such requirements include: 1) compliance with the policies for the Protection of Species Associated with Riparian/Riverine Areas and Vernal Pools as set forth in Section 6.1.2 of the MSHCP; 2) compliance with the policies for the Protection of Narrow Endemic Plan Species as set forth in Section 6.1.3 of the MSHCP; 3) conduct surveys as set forth in Section 6.3.2 of the MSHCP; 4) compliance with the Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines as set forth in Section 6.1.4 of the MSHCP; and 5) compliance with the Best Management Practices and the siting and design criteria as set forth in Section 7.0 and Appendix C of the MSHCP.

B. Contribute mitigation in the amount of $153 million from Measure “A” funds for mitigation of its Covered Activities as described in Section 8.5.1 of the MSHCP. Such contribution shall occur proportionately prior to impacts to Covered Species or their habitats.

C. Carry out all other applicable requirements of the MSHCP, this Agreement, and the Permits. Notwithstanding the foregoing, nothing within this Agreement shall be construed to require RCTC to provide funding, or any other form of compensation, beyond the requirements of the Permits, this Agreement and the MSHCP, consistent with the terms and conditions of the MSHCP.

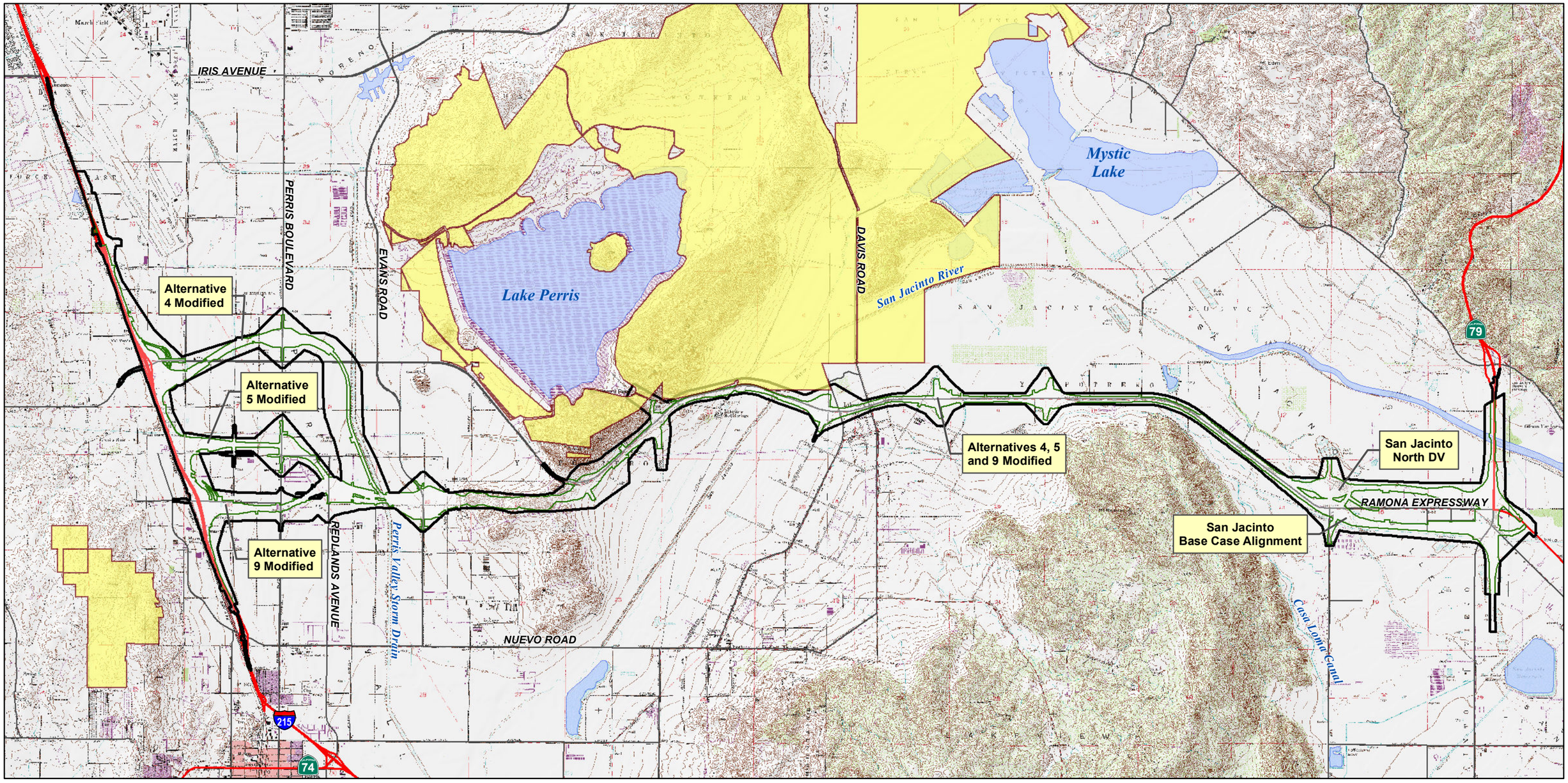
Should the MCP be adopted as a State Highway, then Caltrans would assume responsibility for construction, operations, and maintenance of the MCP project and

would assume responsibility for project compliance with the Western Riverside County MSHCP. Caltrans is also a Permittee for the Western Riverside County MSHCP and that agency's obligations are stipulated in Section 13.8 of the MSHCP Implementing Agreement.

Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat

The Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA) conducted biological studies and produced the *Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat in Western Riverside County* (March 1996). The Habitat Conservation Plan was submitted to the resource agencies to obtain a "take" permit that would be valid for 30 years, authorizing incidental take of Stephens' kangaroo rat within the Plan Area pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the FESA and pursuant to Section 2081 of the California Fish and Game Code. The Habitat Conservation Plan covers 533,954 ac within RCHCA member jurisdictions, including approximately 30,000 ac of occupied Stephens' kangaroo rat habitat. The RCHCA established a regional system of the following seven core areas comprising public and private lands for conservation of Stephens' kangaroo rat: Motte Rimrock, Lake Skinner, Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain, San Jacinto-Lake Perris, Sycamore Canyon-March Air Reserve Base, Steele Peak, and Potrero Area of Critical Environmental Concern. These core Stephens' kangaroo rat areas will contribute to the conservation of covered species under the Western Riverside County MSHCP. The MCP study area is within the Plan Area of the *Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat* and is adjacent to reserve lands of the *Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat*, as shown in Figure 3.17.2.

The Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat is implemented by the RCHCA on behalf of the County of Riverside and eight member cities. To establish a regional mechanism to fund implementation of the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat, Riverside County Ordinance No. 663.10 was adopted, which requires the payment of a fee for projects that are inside the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat fee area but outside of the core reserve system. This funding has been used, in part, to establish and manage a core reserve system designed to maintain the long-term survival of Stephens' kangaroo rat in western Riverside County. The MCP project is within the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat fee area, but outside of the core reserves, and therefore, would qualify to obtain take coverage through payment of fees without having to secure an individual permit. However, public works projects, such as roads, are exempt from fee payment.



LEGEND

- Biological Study Area
- Limits of Proposed Improvements
- Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Reserves
- 4 Alternative(s) Modified

Note: there are no direct impacts to SKR Reserve Lands for any of the modified alternatives

FIGURE 3.17.2

SOURCE: Jacobs Engineering (02/2011); USGS 7.5' Quads; County of Riverside (06/2003)

0 2700 5400 FEET

Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Reserves

08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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San Jacinto Wildlife Area

The SJWA is owned, operated, and managed by the CDFW, and is designated as a Type "A" wildlife area, which represents the highest level of recreation uses designated for CDFW-managed lands.

The SJWA is generally located east of and immediately adjacent to the Lake Perris State Recreation Area, and north of the Ramona Expressway, in western Riverside County, as shown in Figure 3.17.1. The SJWA totals approximately 20,000 ac of wildlife habitat. Plant communities and habitat in the SJWA include alkali sink scrub, freshwater marsh, cottonwood/willow riparian habitat, alluvial grassland, Riversidean sage scrub, and wetlands. Approximately 9,000 ac in the SJWA are restored wetlands, including ponds that were restored using reclaimed water. Part of the San Jacinto-Lake Perris Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Reserve is within the SJWA.

3.17.2 Affected Environment

3.17.2.1 Biological Study Area

The study area for natural communities is referred to as the BSA, which is the area assessed for biological resources, and is larger than the area of potential direct effects. The BSA includes the combined footprints of all the MCP Build Alternatives, areas between alternatives, and, often, a buffer to account for uncertainty in final project design. The BSA is narrow where all MCP Build Alternatives coincide and wider where the build alternatives are farther apart. In some areas, footprints of alternatives were removed, reduced, or moved closer together, but the BSA retained its original width, resulting in a wider buffer. The BSA extends from Interstate 215 (I-215) approximately 16 miles (mi) eastward to State Route 79 (SR-79) and ranges from 900 to 3,300 ft wide. The BSA encompasses approximately 4,475 ac and is shown in Figures 3.17.1 and 3.17.2.

3.17.2.2 Plant Communities

Project-specific mapping of plant communities in the BSA was conducted to provide finer detail and more accuracy than the vegetation mapping provided in the Western Riverside County MSHCP. The project-specific land cover categories used for that mapping are described in this section. Categories were selected and defined to facilitate habitat assessments for plant and animal species requiring surveys. A universal minimum mapping unit was not used in the land cover mapping. Rather, mapping methodologies varied with land cover categories to meet habitat evaluation needs and to ensure that the mapping accurately reflected the definitions of the land cover categories. For example, mapping of marshes involved the consideration of

needs of animal species utilizing such habitats, while mapping of woodland communities was based on numbers, sizes, and cover values of trees.

Table 3.17.A summarizes the total area occupied by each plant community category within the BSA boundary. Natural communities of special concern identified in the BSA are Marsh, Riparian Forest, Riparian Scrub, Riversidean Upland Sage Scrub, and San Jacinto River alkali communities.

Table 3.17.A Land Cover within the BSA

MCP Project Land Cover Category	Area (acres)
Cropland	2,149.0
Dairy	266.2
Lake/Pond	7.1
Developed/Ruderal	1,361.9
Riversidean Upland Sage Scrub	203.8
Nonnative Grassland	169.6
Alkali Grassland	266.3
Marsh	2.6
Riparian Forest	13.2
Riparian Scrub	35.4
TOTAL AREA	**4,475.1**

Source: *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study,* December 2011.
BSA = Biological Study Area
MCP = Mid County Parkway

Based on the vegetation mapping conducted for the MCP project, the predominant natural vegetation communities in the BSA are alkali grassland, Riversidean upland sage scrub, and nonnative grassland. There are also extensive areas of agricultural and developed land within the BSA.

The Western Riverside County MSHCP vegetation categories that correspond to vegetation categories used for mapping resources in the BSA for the MCP project are referenced in each of the land cover category descriptions provided in the following sections.

Cropland

Cropland includes hay, grain and vegetable crops, and sod farms. Cropland also includes areas historically used as cropland that may currently be dominated by ruderal vegetation and used for pasture or left fallow. The cropland category mapped

in the BSA is included within the Western Riverside County MSHCP Agricultural Land vegetation community.

Dairy

Dairy lands include feedlots, dairy waste ponds, and associated ruderal and non-vegetated areas. Small areas of heavily fertilized, weedy seasonal wetlands may be present. The dairy category mapped in the BSA is included within the Western Riverside County MSHCP Agricultural Land vegetation community.

Lake/Pond

Lake/Pond includes areas of freshwater ponds and lakes that may be expected to be dry occasionally, but are inundated during most or all of the growing season to a sufficient depth to prevent rooted vegetation from establishing. There are no natural perennial ponds in the BSA. Artificially created ponds within the BSA are subject to varied uses. These features may be ponded year-round in wet years but not in drier years. The duration of ponding may also vary depending on agricultural or other uses. Lakes and ponds within the BSA include irrigation and stock ponds. Common marsh or riparian plants, such as flatsedge (*Cyperus* spp.) or mule fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), may inhabit the edges of such water bodies. Plants commonly associated with vernal pools, such as woolly marbles (*Psilocarphus brevissimus*) may inhabit receding edges where soils are appropriate. Weedy upland or facultative wetland plants, such as tumbling pigweed (*Amaranthus albus*), doveweed (*Croton setiger*), common sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*), and common knotweed (*Polygonum aviculare*) may inhabit previously inundated areas if water recedes late in the growing season. The Lake/Pond category mapped in the BSA is included within the Western Riverside County MSHCP vegetation community labeled Waters.

Developed/Ruderal[1]

Developed/Ruderal lands include roads, buildings, structures, paved areas, golf courses, ornamental plantings, and associated areas that are nonvegetated or that have only ruderal vegetation. The Developed/Ruderal category mapped in the BSA is

[1] Ruderal, landscaped, and developed areas are often closely associated and frequently intergrade. Because of their close association with landscaped and developed areas, and because they have limited habitat value for native species other than birds, ruderal areas were grouped with developed and landscaped areas in the vegetation mapping.

included within the Western Riverside County MSHCP vegetation community labeled Developed/Disturbed Land.

Riversidean Upland Sage Scrub

Riversidean Upland Sage Scrub includes scrub with brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), California sagebrush, or California buckwheat typically dominant. Red brome (*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*) is usually a dominant in the herbaceous layer. The Riversidean Upland Sage Scrub category mapped in the BSA is included within the Western Riverside County MSHCP vegetation community labeled Coastal Sage Scrub.

Nonnative Grassland

Nonnative Grassland is a predominantly herbaceous community composed of a mixture of nonnative and native species. For purposes of the MCP project, vegetation must have at least one dominant or subdominant nonruderal species in order to be classified as nonnative grassland. Areas vegetated entirely in ruderal species were instead classified as Developed/Ruderal, Cropland, or Dairy, depending on the source of disturbance. Most native plant species are nonruderal and would be considered indicators of this plant community. However, some natives, such as common fiddleneck (*Amsinckia menziesii*), Canada horseweed (*Conyza canadensis*), common sunflower, and doveweed are considered to be ruderal species because they are frequently found in areas of extreme disturbance. All common nonnative species are considered to be ruderal species.

Common dominant species of Nonnative Grassland within the BSA include red brome, common ripgut grass (*Bromus diandrus*), foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*), Mediterranean schismus (*Schismus barbatus*), wild oats (*Avena* spp.), and shortpod mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*). The Nonnative Grassland category mapped in the BSA is included within the Western Riverside County MSHCP vegetation community labeled Grasslands.

Alkali Grassland

Alkali Grassland communities are typically dominated by native alkali-tolerant grasses, forbs, or subshrubs, or by nonnative alkali-tolerant grasses such as foxtail barley. This community occurs in sites that are poorly drained, irregularly flooded, or with a water table that fluctuates near the ground surface. As mapped for the MCP project, this category is the intersection of grassland and mapped alkaline soils. Some areas mapped as Alkali Grassland, particularly in the San Jacinto River floodplain, are highly disturbed by agricultural use or of only moderate alkalinity. Such areas are

predominantly vegetated in nonnative species but may also provide marginal habitat for some alkali species of interest, such as smooth tarplant (*Centromadia pungens* ssp. *laevis*).

Common species of Alkali Grassland within the BSA include various species of saltbush (*Atriplex* sp.), saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), salt heliotrope (*Heliotropium curassavicum*), alkali mallow (*Malvella leprosa*), and bush seepweed (*Suaeda nigra*). The Alkali Grassland category mapped in the BSA is included within the Western Riverside County MSHCP vegetation community labeled Grasslands.

Marsh

Marshes include permanently flooded areas dominated by perennial, emergent herbaceous species, such as flatsedge, bulrush (*Bolboschoenus* and *Schoenoplectus* spp.), and cattails (*Typha* spp.) in stands that are large enough for use by animal species, such as blackbirds, that utilize marshes for foraging or nesting.

Common plants in marshes within the BSA include tall flatsedge (*Cyperus eragrostis*), pale spikerush (*Eleocharis macrostachya*), common bulrush (*Scirpus acutus*), alkali bulrush (*Scirpus maritimus*), wire rush (*Juncus balticus*), and cattails. The Marsh category mapped in the BSA is included within the Western Riverside County MSHCP vegetation community labeled Meadows/Marshes.

Riparian Forest

Riparian Forest includes riparian communities with four or more trees three or more inches in diameter at breast height of western cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), tree willows (*Salix* spp.), or western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), with combined vegetative cover of at least 20 percent. The Riparian Forest category mapped in the BSA is included within the Western Riverside County MSHCP vegetation community labeled Riparian Scrub/Woodland and Forest.[1]

[1] The 3-inch diameter at breast height requirement for trees is based on the 1989 *Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands*, which defines trees as woody plants greater than 3-inch diameter at breast height, regardless of height. Since there is no universal standard for determining woodlands/forests, in order to be conservative, the four-tree minimum was used as the limit to constitute a woodland/forest. Woodlands were classified with a minimum of 20 percent canopy based on common methodology used on other projects in southern California (e.g., *Methods Used to Survey the Vegetation of*

Riparian Scrub

Riparian Scrub includes riparian areas dominated by shrubby willows, mule fat, or broom baccharis (*Baccharis sarothroides*), as well as some areas that would be expected to support these species but that are temporarily nonvegetated due to scouring by floods or to mechanized removal of vegetation from a channel. The Riparian Scrub category mapped in the BSA is included within the Western Riverside County MSHCP vegetation community labeled Riparian Scrub/Woodland and Forest.

3.17.2.3 Wildlife Corridors/Habitat Fragmentation

The majority of the land use in the BSA is primarily agricultural, and native habitat is highly fragmented. However, the BSA is located within three areas identified by the Western Riverside County MSHCP as providing potential wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity. These locations in the BSA are within the San Jacinto River at two locations (south of Lake Perris in Lakeview and at Sanderson Avenue in the City of San Jacinto), and in agricultural areas between the San Jacinto-Lake Perris Reserve and the Lakeview Mountains. Wildlife crossing the existing Ramona Expressway are expected to be coyotes, bobcats, small mammals (such as mice, rats, and squirrels), and some avian species such as roadrunners. The Ramona Expressway currently acts as an impediment to wildlife movement along the existing Lakeview bridge crossing of the San Jacinto River and areas adjacent to the San Jacinto-Lake Perris Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Reserve (as shown in previously referenced Figures 3.17.1 and 3.17.2).

3.17.3 Environmental Consequences

3.17.3.1 Permanent Impacts

For this impact analysis, a conservative (i.e., worst-case) right-of-way footprint was established for each MCP Build Alternative that includes areas of cut-and-fill, staging areas for construction vehicles, equipment and materials, haul routes, and water quality treatment features. While some parts of this right-of-way footprint would only be temporarily disturbed during construction and would be revegetated with native plant species, it is not expected that this revegetation would fully restore the functions and values of the affected habitat. Therefore, the analysis of impacts conservatively estimates a worst-case impact scenario where all areas within the right-of-way

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Orange County Parks and Open Space Areas and The Irvine Company Property, Jones & Stokes, 1993). Although forests are commonly considered to be closed canopy, riparian forest and woodland habitats were grouped together and labeled as riparian forest for the land cover mapping in the BSA for the MCP project.

footprint are calculated as permanent impacts, with the exception of areas spanned by bridges.

Impacts to riparian habitats and jurisdictional areas at the bridged areas have been calculated as permanent impacts and temporary impacts (refer to Section 3.17.3.2). Permanent impacts at bridged areas include all fill material within the grading limits and also include a conservative (i.e., worst-case) estimate of the bridge footprint area (10 percent) to account for the construction of bridge and footings and columns that may be placed in jurisdictional areas. Due to shading effects, all riparian woodland, riparian scrub, and marsh habitat beneath and between bridges have also been calculated as permanent impacts.

As noted above, to assess the most conservative (i.e., worst-case) permanent impacts of the MCP Build Alternatives, this analysis assumed that all natural communities within the right of way footprint established for the project would be permanently impacted. However, the total acres of impacts to each natural community within the right of way footprint may be reduced after the completion of the EIR/EIS process and prior to construction based on:

- Refinement of the project disturbance and grading limits during final design which will, in part, focus on avoiding natural communities within the right of way footprint but outside the disturbance and grading limits, where that avoidance would not compromise the design of the facility or the safety of the construction operations and workers.

- Completion of the permitting processes for the Section 404 permit from the USACE, the Section 1602 Agreement for Streambed Alteration from the CDFW, and the Section 401 water quality certification from the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), which are anticipated to include mitigation requirements that would reduce the project effects in the right of way footprint on protected waters and other riparian features (refer to Section 3.18, Wetlands and Other Waters, later in this EIR/EIS, for further discussion regarding project effects on waters and the permitting requirements for the project).

Where noted, the impact calculations do not include areas within the MCP project/ SR-79 interchange footprint that would be permanently or temporarily impacted by the SR-79 Realignment Project that would be built prior to the MCP project.

Build Alternatives

Table 3.17.B summarizes the impacts of the MCP Build Alternatives to each mapped land cover category. The impacts to natural communities of special concern identified in the BSA are discussed in detail below. Table 3.17.B includes the impacts to land cover categories for the preferred alternative (Alternative 9 Modified with the SJRB DV) which are less than for the other Build Alternatives based on refinements made to the preferred alternative as described in Section 2.5.6, Refinements of the Preliminary Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative/Preferred Alternative.

Riparian/Riverine Areas and Vernal Pools

No feature that meets the Western Riverside County MSHCP definition of vernal pool occurs within the BSA. Therefore, no impacts to vernal pools would occur for any of the MCP Build Alternatives or design variations.

Table 3.17.C shows direct impacts to riparian habitats and additional streambed and associated riparian habitats by alternative. The impact calculations take into account the reduction of impacts based on the design of bridges that would minimize impacts to riparian habitat, as described in Appendix I, Attachment C (Bridge Location Planning Process Avoidance and Minimization) in this EIR/EIS.

All bridges, including the bridges over the San Jacinto River at Lakeview, will require ongoing maintenance during operation of the MCP project. The type of maintenance activities associated with those bridges would include visual inspections for seismic and other safety concerns such as scour and debris build up. The visual inspections will be conducted on foot, and vehicle staging areas would be accommodated along the MCP facility right of way, or from existing roads. No permanent impacts associated with the maintenance activities for the MCP bridges beyond the permanent impacts described above to riparian/riverine resources are expected as a result of the ongoing bridge maintenance activities.

The MCP project will result in an increase in impervious surfaces and drainage areas, the creation of new cut-and-fill slopes, and the removal of vegetation, which all may contribute to an increase in volume and flow velocity of runoff to adjacent areas. The increased volume and velocity of runoff has the potential to increase erosion, alter channel morphology, and reduce water quality.

Table 3.17.B Impacts to Land Cover Categories

Alternative/ Design Variation	Impacts (acres)[1]										
	Cropland	Dairy	Lake/Pond	Developed/Ruderal	Riversidean Upland Sage Scrub	Nonnative Grassland	Alkali Grassland	Marsh	Riparian Forest	Riparian Scrub	TOTAL IMPACTS
Alt 4 Mod	623.6	32.7	3.1	502.5	93.6	48.6	82.3	1.3	4.4	4.7	1,397.0
Alt 4 Mod SJN DV	583.6	98.5	2.3	490.5	93.6	48.6	35.3	1.3	3.8	4.3	1,362.0
Alt 4 Mod SJRB DV	624.8	32.7	3.1	502.5	93.6	48.6	83.2	1.3	4.4	4.7	1,399.0
Alt 5 Mod	601.4	32.7	3.2	513.1	90.5	48.0	82.7	1.3	4.4	4.7	1,382.0
Alt 5 Mod SJN DV	561.4	98.5	2.4	501.2	90.5	47.9	35.8	1.3	3.8	4.2	1,347.0
Alt 5 Mod SJRB DV	602.6	32.7	3.2	513.1	90.5	48.0	83.7	1.3	4.4	4.7	1,384.0
Alt 9 Mod	544.4	32.7	2.7	514.1	88.1	57.5	82.5	1.3	4.4	4.5	1,332.0
Alt 9 Mod SJN DV	504.4	98.5	1.9	502.2	88.1	57.5	35.6	1.3	3.8	4.1	1,297.0
Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV	545.6	32.7	2.7	514.1	88.1	57.5	83.5	1.3	4.4	4.5	1,335.0
Preferred Alternative (Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV)	518.6	23.9	1.4	484.7	86.4	38.3	69.0	0.2	3.2	1.5	1,229.9

Sources: *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* (December 2011) and the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (September 2014) provided in Appendix T.

[1] Acreages include both temporary and permanent impacts (i.e., a conservative, worst-case impact estimate) throughout the MCP project footprint, including areas within the MCP/SR-79 interchange footprint.

Alt = Alternative
MCP = Mid County Parkway
Mod = Modified
SJN DV = San Jacinto North Design Variation
SJRB DV = San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variation
SR-79 = State Route 79

Table 3.17.C Permanent Impacts to Riparian/Riverine Areas (acres), Excluding SR-79 Realignment Impacts[1]

Alternative/Design Variation	Marsh	Riparian Forest	Riparian Scrub	CDFW Jurisdictional Areas without Marsh, Riparian Forest, or Riparian Scrub	Total Area
Alt 4 Mod	0.14	2.33	4.03	4.90	11.40
Alt 4 Mod SJN DV	0.14	2.61	4.11	4.21	11.07
Alt 4 Mod SJRB DV	0.14	2.33	4.03	4.90	11.40
Alt 5 Mod	0.14	2.33	3.94	4.97	11.38
Alt 5 Mod SJN DV	0.14	2.61	4.03	4.28	11.06
Alt 5 Mod SJRB DV	0.14	2.33	3.94	4.97	11.38
Alt 9 Mod	0.14	2.33	3.79	4.88	11.14
Alt 9 Mod SJN DV	0.14	2.61	3.88	4.19	10.82
Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV	0.14	2.33	3.79	4.88	11.14
Preferred Alternative (Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV)	**0.17**	**1.43**	**1.11**	**6.10**	**8.81**

Source: *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* (December 2011) and the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (September 2014) provided in Appendix T.

[1] Includes all areas mapped as Marsh, Riparian Forest, and Riparian scrub, and all CDFW jurisdictional areas, including streambeds lacking riparian vegetation. Excludes temporary impacts associated with bridges. Also excludes impacts to riparian/riverine areas that are within the MCP/SR-79 interchange footprint, which will be affected by the SR-79 project prior to construction of MCP and will be mitigated by the SR-79 project). Permanent impacts in this table are a portion of the temporary and permanent impacts previously provided in Table 3.17.B. Impacts to some areas of marsh and riparian scrub are documented again in Table 3.17.D because they are within the San Jacinto River Floodplain at Lakeview, which is of concern because of the sensitive species that potentially grow there.

Alt = Alternative
CDFW = California Department of Fish and Wildlife
MCP = Mid County Parkway
Mod = Modified
SJN DV = San Jacinto North Design Variation
SJRB DV = San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variation
SR-79 = State Route 79

Beneficial effects would also occur, such as treated storm water runoff from the freeway to riparian/riverine areas providing additional water to maintain the riparian vegetation that is already established and providing sufficient additional water to create wetland conditions where they do not currently exist.

Indirect impacts of the MCP Build Alternatives on areas adjacent to the MCP footprint may result from edge effects such as exotic plant infestations, litter, pollutants from storm water runoff from vehicle use of the freeway, and unauthorized recreational use. Exotic plant infestations may degrade native habitat that supports special-status species. Additional access points for unauthorized off-road vehicle use may result from the MCP project. Off-road vehicle use may destroy native vegetation, degrade habitat of sensitive species, and promote exotic plant infestation.

Additionally, pollutants (in the form of nitrogen compounds from car emissions) may settle on the soil and stimulate growth of nonnative species, which may out-compete native species. Fire risk increases the potential to require vegetation clearing and removal of habitat adjacent to roads. Increased fire frequency may result in type conversion of native habitats and an increase in the number of exotic plant species.

Indirect effects on plants in the San Jacinto River floodplain may result from localized increases in water velocity with the San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variation (SJRB DV) or inundation following major floods due to changes in hydraulics caused by placement of bridge columns, abutments, and fill. However, because of the negligible increases in water velocity and flood inundation potential that would occur (refer to Section 3.9, Hydrology and Floodplains, for a more detailed discussion of water velocity changes and flood inundation potential within the San Jacinto River channel), substantial indirect effects on plant species would not be expected.

Indirect impacts on riparian/riverine areas may also result from growth-related effects of the MCP Build Alternatives, which, as discussed in Section 3.2, Growth, would only be expected in areas where the MCP alignment does not follow the HCLE CETAP Corridor alignment in the Riverside County General Plan. In addition, much of the riverine/riparian habitat in the MCP project vicinity is within existing preserves or within the Western Riverside County MSHCP Criteria Area, where development will be subject to Western Riverside County MSHCP cell criteria. New development throughout the MCP project vicinity will be subject to the riverine/riparian requirements of the Western Riverside County MSHCP.

In addition to the direct permanent impacts to riparian areas listed above, the MCP project may result in indirect impacts to riparian habitat due to shading effects at bridged locations. Therefore, impacts to riparian forest, riparian scrub, and marsh habitats beneath and between bridges are considered to be permanent impacts.

Other Natural Communities of Special Concern

Other natural communities that may be of concern within the modified BSA are Riversidean upland sage scrub and alkali communities within the San Jacinto River floodplain in the Lakeview area. Table 3.17.D shows the direct impacts for each of these natural communities. Indirect impacts on areas of these natural communities that are adjacent to the MCP project footprint may result from edge effects, such as

Table 3.17.D Permanent Impacts to Other Natural Communities of Special Concern

Alternative/ Design Variation	Riversidean Upland Sage Scrub (acres)	Alkali Communities in the San Jacinto River Floodplain at Lakeview (acres)[1]					TOTAL
		Alkali Grassland	Marsh	Riparian Scrub	Cropland	Total San Jacinto River Alkali Communities	
Alt 4 Mod	93.6	17.1	0.2	0.3	11.2	28.9	122.4
Alt 4 Mod SJN DV	93.6	17.1	0.2	0.3	11.2	28.9	122.4
Alt 4 Mod SJRB DV	93.6	18.0	0.2	0.3	12.4	31.0	124.6
Alt 5 Mod	90.5	17.1	0.2	0.3	11.2	28.9	119.3
Alt 5 Mod SJN DV	90.5	17.1	0.2	0.3	11.2	28.9	119.3
Alt 5 Mod SJRB DV	90.5	18.0	0.2	0.3	12.4	31.0	121.4
Alt 9 Mod	88.1	17.1	0.2	0.3	11.2	28.9	117.0
Alt 9 Mod SJN DV	88.1	17.1	0.2	0.3	11.2	28.9	117.0
Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV	88.1	18.0	0.2	0.3	12.4	31.0	119.1
Preferred Alternative (Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV)	**86.4**	**17.7**	**0.2**	**0.3**	**11.6**	**29.8**	**116.2**

Source: *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* (December 2011) and the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (September 2014) provided in Appendix T.

[1] Acreages include both temporary and permanent impacts to all mapped plant communities within the 100-year floodplain of the San Jacinto River at Lakeview except for impacts to areas mapped as developed/ruderal (Appendix E of the *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study*). No portions overlap the SR-79 Realignment Project. Impacts to riparian/riverine areas within the floodplain are also included in Tables 3.17.C and 3.17.K and impacts to habitats of sensitive plant species within the floodplain are also included in Sections 3.19 and 3.21. All impacts in this table are also included in Table 3.17.B. Thus, acreages of impacts are documented more than once.

Alt = Alternative
SJN DV = San Jacinto North Design Variation
SJRB DV = San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variation
Mod = Modified
SR-79 = State Route 79

the spread of exotic plant infestations, litter, increased fire risk, unauthorized recreational use, and pollutants associated with vehicle use of the parkway.

Riversidean Sage Scrub

Riversidean upland sage scrub occurs in the BSA in the hilly area south of Lake Perris, along I-215 near Placentia Avenue, and along SR-79 north of the San Jacinto River. Riversidean upland sage scrub is of habitat value for coastal California gnatcatcher and many other species.

Alkali Communities in the San Jacinto River Floodplain at Lakeview

The San Jacinto River floodplain in the Lakeview area is characterized by heavy, mostly alkaline soils that support several rare plant species, including spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*), San Jacinto Valley crownscale (*Atriplex coronata* var. *notatior*), Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*), and smooth tarplant. Although the floodplain has been highly disturbed by agricultural use and the invasion of nonnative grasses and forbs, these and other rare species still persist in localized areas where the habitat is still suitable. Thus, these communities are of conservation concern.

Alkaline communities in the BSA within the San Jacinto River 100-year floodplain were mapped for the MCP Build Alternatives as Alkali Grassland, Marsh, Riparian Scrub, and Cropland (Table 3.17.D). The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) mapped these areas all as Agriculture in the Western Riverside County MSHCP mapping (CNPS 2006), with the exception of a very small area at the northern edge of the BSA that was mapped as Alkaline Ephemeral Wetland. The MCP Build Alternatives are not located within the area mapped by CNPS as Alkaline Ephemeral Wetland and, therefore, Alkaline Ephemeral Wetland is not considered to be affected by the MCP project. All of these alkaline communities are disturbed, with most of the area dominated by nonnative species.

The preferred alternative (Alternative 9 Modified with the SJRB DV) would result in permanent impacts to 29.8 acres of San Jacinto River alkali plant communities (riparian and non-riparian habitats) from both fill and from shading under the bridge. The riparian habitats within the floodplain will be mitigated along with other riparian habitat. The preferred alternative would result in 29.3 acres of impacts to non-riparian alkali communities (alkali grasslands and croplands within the 100 year floodplain of the San Jacinto River at Lakeview) of which 27.16 acres would be permanent and 2.23 acres would be temporary. Of the 27.16 acres of permanent impacts, 6.36 acres of impacts are attributable to the shading underneath and between the bridges and 20.80 acres is from the grading needed to construct the bridge of the San Jacinto River along with other improvements within the right-of-way. As part of the MSHCP consistency determination process, RCTC has committed to mitigating these impacts to San Jacinto River alkali plant communities by acquiring (as well as restoring and/or enhancing) 76.6 acres of similar habitat within either the vernal pool complex in

Noncontiguous Habitat Block 7 of the MSHCP Criteria Area, since that area has similar soils and known sensitive plant locations, or within the floodplain of the San Jacinto River in the Lakeview area. In addition, Mitigation Measure NC-6 provides for salvage and reuse for restoration purposes of the top one foot of alkali soils where grading/excavation occurs.

Wildlife Corridors/Habitat Fragmentation

The alignment of the MCP Build Alternatives generally follow the existing Ramona Expressway, which currently acts as an impediment to wildlife movement. Impacts to wildlife movement resulting from the MCP project are not expected to create substantially new or different impacts than already experienced along the existing Ramona Expressway, because the Ramona Expressway currently creates edge effects and is an impediment to the wildlife movement in this already fragmented habitat.

As shown in previously referenced Figure 3.17.1, the MCP project crosses five areas designated in the Western Riverside County MSHCP as conservation features that consist of large core blocks of habitat and smaller blocks of habitat linking larger habitat blocks. Although the Ramona Expressway already acts as an impediment to wildlife movement, the MCP project will be a wider freeway and would be a greater impediment to wildlife movement due to the increased width and permanent fencing along the MCP right of way. To reduce this effect, the design of the MCP Build Alternatives has incorporated wildlife crossings consisting of bridges, a wildlife crossing structure, and numerous drainage culverts that would facilitate wildlife movement under the freeway. The locations of these wildlife crossings are shown in Figure 3.17.1, as well as more detailed engineering locations shown in Attachment E in Appendix I of this Final EIR/EIS. These wildlife crossing features have been sized appropriately, sited at appropriate distances to convey wildlife, and the intermediary areas will be fenced with wildlife jump-outs to direct wildlife to the crossing structures. Additionally, there would be impacts to smaller patches of undeveloped land that may function for small and/or sedentary wildlife as live-in habitat or that may serve as foraging areas or movement corridors between larger patches for larger species or birds.

Roadkill may occur along the MCP Build Alternatives, particularly for small mammals that are not impeded by the fenced right-of-way boundary. Since smaller animal species (e.g., pocket mice and kangaroo rats) have smaller dispersal ranges (ranging from approximately 65–379 ft), only populations in proximity to the MCP Build Alternatives are anticipated to be affected by roadkill. In addition, during cooler

parts of the day and year, reptiles that frequently warm themselves on asphalt would be susceptible to roadkill on the MCP project surfaces. As a result, there would likely be a reduction in population size of small mammals and reptiles in proximity to the MCP Build Alternatives.

The MCP crossing of the San Jacinto River near Lakeview for the base case and the San Jacinto North Design Variation (SJN DV) for all of the MCP Build Alternatives encompasses the entire floodplain south of Lake Perris for a bridge length of over 4,000 ft. However, the MCP Build Alternatives should not constrain wildlife movement substantially more than the existing Ramona Expressway (which would remain a frontage road in this location after MCP is built). The MCP project crossing of the San Jacinto River for the SJRB DV for all of the MCP Build Alternatives does not encompass the entire floodplain; however, the bridge span is approximately 2,000 ft, which is adequate to provide for wildlife movement and, as with the longer bridge design under the base case, should not constrain wildlife movement substantially more than the existing Ramona Expressway.

All the MCP Build Alternatives would result in similar conditions related to habitat fragmentation and wildlife movement. The existing Ramona Expressway serves as a wildlife movement impediment and results in edge effects and habitat fragmentation. Additionally, impacts to wildlife movement and habitat fragmentation can be assessed as they affect proposed Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area Features. The Western Riverside County MSHCP describes future conservation for several large contiguous areas of undeveloped land along the composite footprint of all MCP Build Alternatives. Proposed conservation within these areas is described in the context of five separate Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area Features (Proposed Constrained Linkage 4, Existing Core C, Proposed Extension of Existing Core 2, Proposed Non-Contiguous Habitat Block 4, and Proposed Linkage 3), as shown on Figure 3.17.1. These proposed Conservation Area Features also include blocks of habitat/reserve lands that are conserved under the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat.

As required under the Siting and Design Criteria and the Guidelines for Construction of Wildlife Crossings provided in Sections 7.5.1 and 7.5.2 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP, respectively, the MCP project has previously incorporated the design of crossings to promote wildlife movement, the connectivity of habitat, and minimize impacts to the aquatic environment. Extensive meetings and discussions have taken place since the initiation of the MCP project in 2003 with the wildlife

agencies (the USFWS and the CDFW) to design and place the proposed wildlife crossings in the most advantageous locations and still meet various engineering design standards.

Wildlife crossings are designed at key locations within the Western Riverside County MSHCP Criteria Area to maintain habitat connectivity through the Core Area and Linkages, avoid impacts to major drainages in the composite footprint, and cross steep terrain. The design criteria specified in the Western Riverside County MSHCP Sections 7.5.1 and 7.5.2 were incorporated into the design of the wildlife crossings for the MCP Build Alternatives. The types of crossings include bridges, which would allow animals to cross under the MCP, and undercrossings, which would allow animals to cross under the MCP via culverts and a galvanized steel ellipse structure in one location. The wildlife crossing locations and cross-section plans for the MCP Build Alternatives are shown in Attachment E in Appendix I of this Final EIR/EIS.

Based on the area of opening for these crossing/bridges shown in Attachment F of Appendix I in this Final EIR/EIS, the design of these crossings/bridges provides more than adequate undercrossing widths and heights for wildlife for all the MCP Build Alternatives. The proposed bridges that provide areas for undercrossings by wildlife range from 338 ft to 4,326 ft in length, from 8 ft to 41 ft in height, and are 62 ft in width. The proposed bridge designs would provide a connection between Core Areas and Linkages for wildlife to safely move between adjacent habitats.

At Proposed Constrained Linkage 20, as designated in the Western Riverside County MSHCP, Wildlife Crossing No. 10 (as shown in Attachment E in Appendix I) has been designed for the sole purpose of facilitating wildlife movement between the San Jacinto-Lake Perris Reserve and the Lakeview Mountains. This 35 ft wide by 12 ft high by 210 ft long wildlife undercrossing will accommodate wildlife movement through an area that is currently used for agricultural purposes. Although this undercrossing was originally proposed to be used additionally as a trail connector for humans and equestrians, it has been redesigned to be restricted to wildlife usage only and will not be used for any human trail connections. RCTC will coordinate with the County of Riverside to plan for a separate trail crossing that meets the County trail requirements and to ensure that it is a sufficient distance from Crossing No. 10. It is anticipated that an arched structure, such as a steel elliptical culvert, including a soft bottom, will be used for Crossing No. 10. Additionally, a 36-inch reinforced concrete box culvert, which also has been designed solely for wildlife and not for conveying water for drainage purposes or for humans or equestrians, is included immediately

west of Wildlife Crossing No. 10. That crossing has been designed to accommodate Los Angeles pocket mouse, which is the only terrestrial planning species for Proposed Constrained Linkage 20. The wide openings of the wildlife undercrossing would allow sufficient light for wildlife to see from the opening of the undercrossing to the end. All wildlife crossings, including Crossing No. 10, will be fenced to deter animals from accessing the road; however, jump-outs and one-way gates will be provided to allow the animals to escape should they enter into the fenced road right of way. The center median of the MCP facility is designed with a thrie-beam guardrail,[1] which would allow any animals that may get onto the facility to pass through the median area.

The Western Riverside County MSHCP states that the major covered activities potentially affecting the linkage include the Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore CETAP Corridor, which in this area is the MCP project. The Western Riverside County MSHCP identifies the following terrestrial animal species as Planning Species for Proposed Constrained Linkage 20 that may use the wildlife crossing: Los Angeles pocket mouse, western pond turtle, and arroyo toad. The openness ratio of 0.6 is more than adequate for these species.

Western Riverside County MSHCP

As a "Permittee" under the Western Riverside County MSHCP, RCTC is obligated to implement specific conditions, as described in Section 3.17.1. At the time the Western Riverside County MSHCP was developed, existing available information was not sufficient to disclose the impacts and mitigation measures for all species in the MSHCP. Therefore, the MSHCP incorporated survey requirements in order to adequately identify and mitigate impacts to those species, including identifying areas with long-term conservation value for those species. In order to comply with the Western Riverside County MSHCP, as described in the following subsections, focused surveys were conducted for those MSHCP-designated survey area species.

In order to verify that there were no outstanding questions relative to use of the original species survey data, MCP project representatives met with Karin Cleary-Rose (USFWS) on February 22, 2011. The determination of that meeting was that no additional focused surveys would be required and that the MCP project would incorporate least Bell's vireo survey data collected in 2008 for another project.

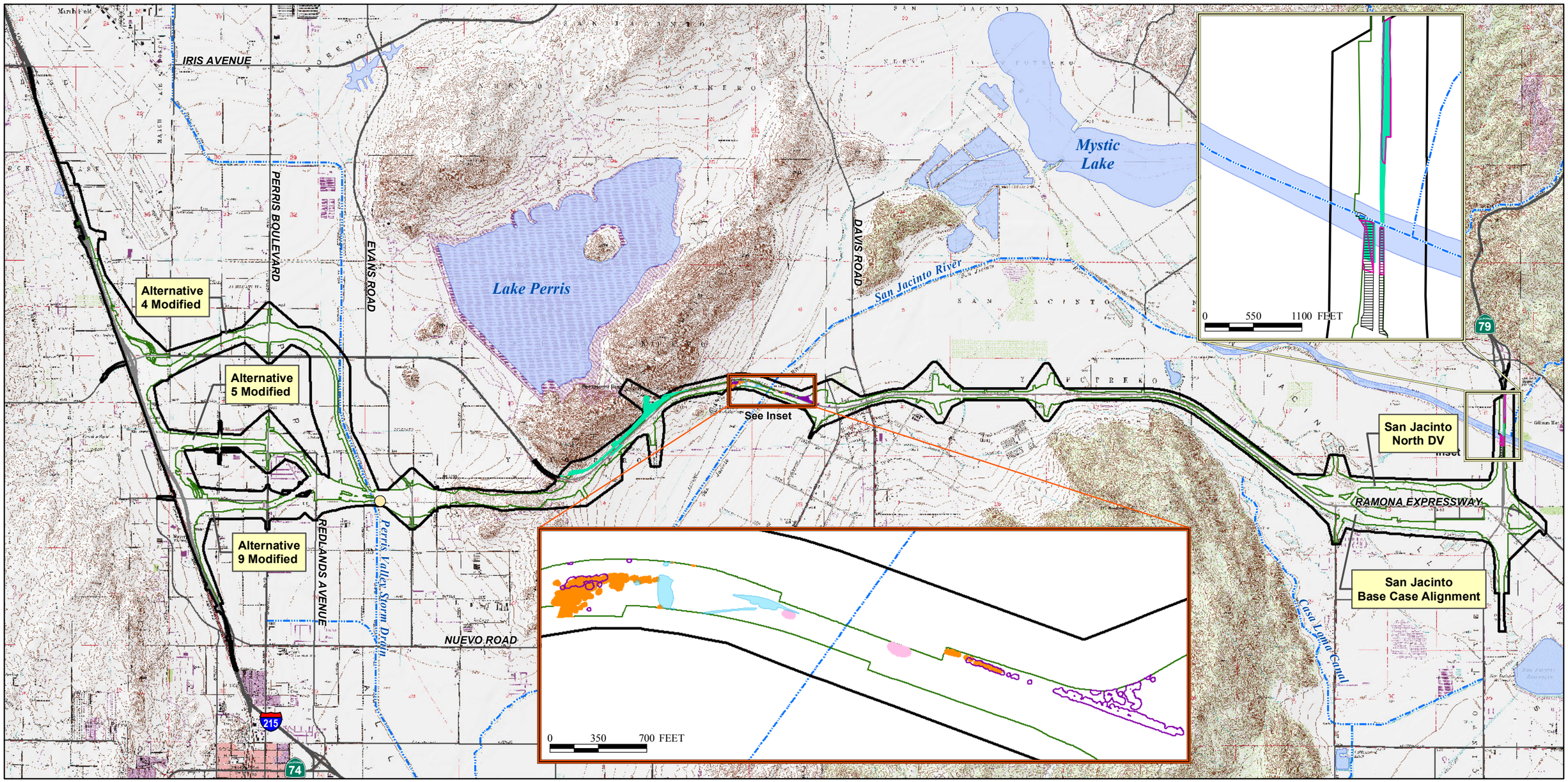
[1] Metal guardrail on posts.

Figure 3.17.3 shows areas of habitat suitable for long-term conservation of plant and animal species covered under the Western Riverside County MSHCP. The MCP project compliance with the conditions in the Western Riverside County MSHCP are discussed in more detail below.

Compliance with the Western Riverside County MSHCP Policies for the Protection of Species Associated with Riparian/Riverine Areas and Vernal Pools

The MCP project is in compliance with the Western Riverside County MSHCP policies for the Protection of Species Associated with Riparian/Riverine Areas and Vernal Pools as set forth in Section 6.1.2 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP. (Refer to Section 4.1 in the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination provided in Appendix T.) Focused surveys were conducted for species associated with riparian/riverine areas and vernal pools, pursuant to the requirement of MSHCP Section 6.1.2. Because avoidance of riparian/riverine areas is not feasible, in order to be in compliance with Section 6.1.2 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP, a Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (DBESP) was prepared to address the impacts of the preferred alternative (Alternative 9 Modified with the SJRB DV) on riparian and riverine resources. A DBESP is a determination that, with the proposed design and compensation measures included in the MCP project, the overall Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area design and configuration would be biologically equivalent or superior to what it would be if the MCP project had met the western Riverside County MSHCP avoidance requirements. The DBESP ensures replacement of lost functions and values of habitat for covered species. The DBESP prepared for the MCP project impacts to riparian/riverine resources involves a combination of on-site and off-site mitigation, including creation, enhancement, and/or restoration.

The DBESPs prepared for the preferred Alternative (Alternative 9 with the SJRB DV) are provided in Appendix T, Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, in this Final EIR/EIS. Further description of the mitigation commitments included in the DBESP for riparian/riverine areas is provided later in Section 3.17.4, Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures.



LEGEND

- Biological Study Area
- Limits of Proposed Improvements
- Major Water Courses
- 4 Alternative(s) Modified

Habitat Suitable for Long Term Conservation for MSHCP Survey Area Species

- San Jacinto Valley Crownscale
- Spreading Navarretia
- Coulter's Goldfields
- Smooth Tarplant
- Least Bell's Vireo
- Burrowing Owl
- Los Angeles Pocket Mouse
- San Bernardino Kangaroo Rat

FIGURE 3.17.3

SOURCE: LSA (Supplement to the Natural Environment Study, 2011); Jacobs Engineering (02/2011); County of Riverside (2002, 2010 & 2011); USGS 7.5' Topos

0 2650 5300 FEET

MSHCP Survey Area Species Habitat Suitable for Long Term Conservation

08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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Table 3.17.C summarizes direct impacts to Western Riverside County MSHCP riparian/riverine areas. The impacts of the preferred alternative will be mitigated based on the implementation of the DBESP for riparian and riverine resources described later in Section 3.17.4.

Section 6.1.2 of the MSHCP requires focused surveys of riparian bird species (least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher, and yellow billed cuckoo) if a project will impact suitable riparian habitat. Because there will be riparian habitat impacted by the MCP Build Alternatives, a habitat suitability assessment and focused surveys were conducted. The least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) is the only riparian/riverine species that was determined to be present within the BSA. A discussion of impacts and location of the least Bell's vireo occurrence is provided later in Section 3.21, Threatened and Endangered Species.

All the MCP Build Alternatives and all design variations, including the preferred alternative, would affect the habitat occupied by one nesting pair of least Bell's vireo and potentially up to two pairs of least Bell's vireo within suitable habitat contiguous with the pair observed in 2008. All riparian scrub habitat contiguous with habitat occupied by least Bell's vireo located along the San Jacinto River west of Sanderson Avenue was determined to have long-term conservation value for this species. Table 3.17.E shows the direct impacts that each alternative would have on habitat suitable for long-term conservation for the least Bell's vireo, which range from 3.59 to 3.66 ac, depending on the alternative and the design variation. As shown, the preferred alternative (Alternative 9 Modified with the SJRB DV) would impact 3.66 ac of least Bell's vireo habitat suitable for long-term conservation. Therefore, a DBESP was prepared addressing the impacts of the preferred alternative to least Bell's vireo. Details of those impacts of the preferred alternative and the required mitigation in the DBESP for the least Bell's vireo are discussed later in Section 3.21, Threatened and Endangered Species.

The riparian habitat that would be affected by the MCP Build Alternatives was also determined to have habitat suitable for southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*). No nesting pairs of southwestern willow flycatcher were observed during the focused survey efforts and all observations of this species were determined to be migrating. Therefore, the MCP Build Alternatives will not affect habitat suitable for long-term conservation for the southwestern willow flycatcher.

Table 3.17.E Impacts to Least Bell's Vireo Habitat Suitable for Long-Term Conservation

Alternative/Design Variation	Impacts (ac)[1]
Alternative 4 Modified	3.66
Alternative 4 Modified SJN DV	3.59
Alternative 4 Modified SJRB DV	3.66
Alternative 5 Modified	3.66
Alternative 5 Modified SJN DV	3.59
Alternative 5 Modified SJRB DV	3.66
Alternative 9 Modified	3.66
Alternative 9 Modified SJN DV	3.59
Alternative 9 Modified SJRB DV	3.66
Preferred Alternative (Alternative 9 Modified SJRB DV)	3.66

Sources: *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* (December 2011) and the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (October 2014) provided in Appendix T.

[1] The impacts to least Bell's vireo occupied riparian habitat solely occur in the San Jacinto River at SR-79 and include a total of both permanent and temporary impacts. Least Bell's vireo habitat mapping provided in the *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* included 0.06 ac within the SR-79 Realignment project footprint for the SJN DVs for all MCP Build Alternatives. Subsequent to approval of the *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study*, the habitat at that location was mapped at a finer scale and the 0.06 ac within the SR-79 Realignment project footprint was excluded due to lack of suitable vegetation. Accordingly, all Least Bell's vireo habitat mapped for this project is outside the SR-79 project footprint.

ac = acre
MCP = Mid County Parkway
SJN DV = San Jacinto North Design Variation
SJRB DV = San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variation
SR-79 = State Route 79

No suitable habitat for the yellow billed cuckoo occurs within the BSA. Therefore, the MCP Build Alternatives will not affect this species.

The BSA was surveyed for vernal pools. No impacts to vernal pools would occur for any of the MCP Build Alternatives because there are no features satisfying the Western Riverside County MSHCP definition of vernal pool occurrence within the BSA. Impacts of the preferred alternative to wetland areas that do not meet the definition of vernal pool will be mitigated to the extent that they are regulated by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the CDFW (as discussed later in Section 3.18) or have riparian habitat require a DBESP under the Western Riverside County MSHCP (as discussed above).

Per MSHCP Section 6.1.2, focused surveys for fairy shrimp were conducted in 2005–2006 and 2006–2007 in wetland ponded areas and any other habitat in the

BSA that could potentially support fairy shrimp. The results of those focused surveys were negative for listed fairy shrimp. Thus, there would be no impacts to fairy shrimp as a result of the MCP Build Alternatives, and no DBESP related to vernal pools or fairy shrimp was required.

No other species associated with riparian/riverine areas or vernal pools for which the Western Riverside County MSHCP requires focused surveys was determined to be present within the BSA.

Compliance with the Western Riverside County MSHCP Policies for the Protection of Narrow Endemic Plant Species

In order for the MCP project to be in compliance with the policies for the Protection of Narrow Endemic Plant Species as set forth in Section 6.1.3 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP, a habitat suitability assessment was conducted for the following target plant species within Western Riverside County MSHCP-designated Narrow Endemic Plant Species Survey Areas (NEPSSAs)[1] 3 and 3a:

- Munz's onion (*Allium munzii*) – NEPSSA 3
- San Diego ambrosia (*Ambrosia pumula*) – NEPSSAs 3 and 3a
- Many-stemmed dudleya (*Dudleya multicaulis*) – NEPSSAs 3 and 3a
- Spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*) – NEPSSAs 3 and 3a
- California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) – NEPSSAs 3 and 3a
- Wright's trichocoronis (*Trichocoronis wrightii* var. *wrightii*) – NEPSSAs 3 and 3a

Focused surveys for these narrow endemic plants were conducted from March 22 to April 15, 2005; May 4 to July 19, 2005; April 13 to April 27, 2006; and May 17 to June 29, 2006, where suitable habitat was identified based on the vegetation mapping. Additional areas included in the BSA were assessed for suitable habitat in March and April, 2011.

The only target NEPSSA species found within the survey areas was spreading navarretia. In areas where this species was found to be present, those areas were

[1] NEPSSA: These are survey areas designated by the MSHCP for certain narrow endemic plant species. Within the designated survey areas, habitat suitability assessments, focused surveys, and impact evaluations are required for the target narrow endemic plant species.

assessed for long-term conservation value. In order to comply with the Western Riverside County MSHCP, any impacts to more than 10 percent of areas that provide for long-term conservation value for the species require that a DBESP be prepared.

There will be 1.09 ac of impacts to habitat suitable for long-term conservation value for spreading navarretia within the MCP project footprint, as shown in Table 3.17.F. The MCP Build Alternatives, including the preferred alternative (Alternative 9 Modified with the SJRB DV) will affect the entire 1.09 ac of long-term conservation value for spreading navarretia. Because the MCP Build Alternatives will affect greater than 10 percent of areas with long-term conservation value for spreading navarretia, a DBESP was prepared pursuant to MSHCP Section 6.1.3. Details of impacts of the preferred alternative and mitigation commitments in the DBESP for NEPSSA species (specifically spreading navarretia) are discussed later in Sections 3.19, Plant Species, and 3.21, Threatened and Endangered Species.

Table 3.17.F Permanent Impacts to Habitats Suitable for Long-Term Conservation of Narrow Endemic Plant Survey Species

Alternative/Design Variation	Permanent Impacts to Spreading Navarretia (acres)[1]
Alternative 4 Modified	1.09
Alternative 4 Modified SJN DV	1.09
Alternative 4 Modified SJRB DV	1.09
Alternative 5 Modified	1.09
Alternative 5 Modified SJN DV	1.09
Alternative 5 Modified SJRB DV	1.09
Alternative 9 Modified	1.09
Alternative 9 Modified SJN DV	1.09
Alternative 9 Modified SJRB DV	1.09
Preferred Alternative (Alternative 9 Modified SJRB DV	1.09

Source: *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* (December 2011) and the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (September 2014) provided in Appendix T.

[1] Acreages include temporary and permanent impacts. No parts overlap the SR-79 Realignment Project.

SJN DV = San Jacinto North Design Variation
SJRB DV = San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variation
SR-79 = State Route 79

Compliance with the Western Riverside County MSHCP Policies for Additional Survey Needs and Procedures

As required by Section 6.3.2 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP, habitat suitability assessments within the Criteria Area Species Survey Areas (CASSAs)[1] for the following plant species were conducted within the BSA:

- San Jacinto Valley crownscale (*Atriplex coronata* var. *notatior*) – CASSAs 3 and 3a
- Parish's brittlescale (*Atriplex parishii*) – CASSAs 3 and 3a
- Davidson's saltscale (*Atriplex serenana* var. *davidsonii*) – CASSAs 3 and 3a
- Thread-leaved brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*) – CASSAs 3 and 3a
- Smooth tarplant (*Centromadia pungens* ssp. *laevis*) – CASSAs 3 and 3a
- Round-leaved filaree (*Erodium macrophyllum*) – CASSAs 3 and 3a
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) – CASSAs 3 and 3a
- Little mousetail (*Myosurus minimus*) – CASSAs 3 and 3a
- Mud nama (*Nama stenocarpum*) – CASSAs 3 and 3a

The Western Riverside County MSHCP has designated survey areas for the following three wildlife species within the BSA:

- Los Angeles pocket mouse
- San Bernardino kangaroo rat
- Burrowing owl

Pursuant to MSHCP Section 6.3.2, habitat suitability assessments were conducted in the BSA for the above-mentioned plant and animal species. In areas where suitable habitat was identified, focused surveys were conducted from March to July 2005 and from April to June 2006 for criteria area plant species; from July to August 2005 for Los Angeles pocket mouse; in July 2005 for San Bernardino kangaroo rat; and from May to August 2005 and April to July 2006 for burrowing owl. A burrowing owl was incidentally observed in the BSA on April 14, 2011, during vegetation mapping, and habitat suitability assessments for new areas added to the BSA. In areas where the above-mentioned species were found to be present as a result of MCP and other focused surveys, the areas were assessed for

[1] CASSA: These are survey areas designated by the MSHCP for additional plant species. Within the designated survey area, habitat suitability assessments, focused surveys, and impact evaluations are required for the target plant species.

long-term conservation value for each species within the designated survey area within the MCP project footprint. Table 3.17.G summarizes impacts of the MCP Build Alternatives including the preferred alternative (Alternative 9 Modified with the SJRB DV) on the additional survey species determined to have habitat suitable for long-term conservation within the Western Riverside County MSHCP survey area within the project footprint. In order to comply with the Western Riverside County MSHCP, any impacts to greater than 10 percent of areas that provide for long-term conservation value for the species require that a DBESP be prepared. The MCP Build Alternatives will affect 100 percent of areas with long-term conservation value for these species within the Western Riverside County MSHCP survey area. Because the MCP Build Alternatives will affect greater than 10 percent of areas with long-term conservation value for these species, DBESPs were prepared for the preferred alternative pursuant to MSHCP Section 6.1.3. Details of impacts and mitigation commitments in the DBESP for each of these species are discussed later in Sections 3.19, Plant Species; 3.20, Animal Species; and 3.21, Threatened and Endangered Species.

As shown in Table 3.17.G, the impacts of the preferred alternative (Alternative 9 Modified with the SJRB DV) for the Los Angeles pocket mouse and the San Bernardino kangaroo rat are less than for the other Build Alternatives. Refinements to the preferred alternative, including use of an approximately 4,125 foot long retaining wall to reduce cut-and-fill (refer to Figure 2.5.A in Chapter 2, Project Alternatives, in this Final EIR/EIS for the location of the retaining wall), resulted in substantial reductions in the impacts of the preferred alternative to habitat suitable for long-term conservation for those two species.

Compliance with the Western Riverside County MSHCP Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines

The MCP project will comply with the Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines in Section 6.1.4 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP. The following sections discuss the Western Riverside County MSHCP Section 6.1.4, Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines and features that have been incorporated into the design of the preferred alternative to reduce edge effects.

Table 3.17.G Permanent and Temporary Impacts to Habitat Suitable for Long-Term Conservation of Additional Survey Species

Alternative/ Design Variation	Permanent and Temporary Impacts (ac)[1]					
	Smooth Tarplant	Coulter's Goldfields	San Jacinto Valley Crownscale	Los Angeles Pocket Mouse	San Bernardino Kangaroo Rat	Burrowing Owl[3]
Alt 4 Mod	2.72	1.99	0.36	44.07	3.83	3.1
Alt 4 Mod SJN DV	2.72	1.99	0.36	44.26	3.45	3.1
Alt 4 Mod SJRB DV	2.73	2.25	0.36	44.07	3.83	3.1
Alt 5 Mod	2.72	1.99	0.36	44.07	3.83	3.1
Alt 5 Mod SJN DV	2.72	1.99	0.36	44.26	3.45	3.1
Alt 5 Mod SJRB DV	2.73	2.25	0.36	44.07	3.83	3.1
Alt 9 Mod	2.72	1.99	0.36	44.07	3.83	3.1
Alt 9 Mod SJN DV	2.72	1.99	0.36	44.26	3.45	3.1
Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV	2.73	2.25	0.36	44.07	3.83	3.1
Preferred Alternative (Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV)	2.72	2.25	0.36	20.85	1.29	3.1

Source: *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* (December 2011) and the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (September 2014) provided in Appendix T.

[1] Acreages include temporary and permanent impacts. No portions overlap the SR-79 Realignment Project.

[2] Based on 300 ft of foraging radius around occupied burrows of pairs or unpaired resident single birds (Burrowing Owl Consortium 1993).

ac = acre
Alt = Alternative
ft = foot, feet
MCP = Mid County Parkway
Mod = Modified
SJN DV = San Jacinto North Design Variation
SJRB DV = San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variation
SR-79 = State Route 79

Drainage. The Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines indicate that proposed developments in proximity to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area are to incorporate measures, including measures required through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements, to ensure that the quantity and quality of runoff discharged to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area are not altered in an adverse way when compared with existing conditions.

The MCP Build Alternatives, including the preferred alternative, include measures to reduce discharge of untreated surface runoff from developed and paved areas into the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area. Proposed Treatment BMPs include biofiltration swales and infiltration basins. The BMPs would be designed to target removal of suspended solids, metals, toxins, chemicals, petroleum products, or other elements that might degrade or harm biological resources or ecosystem processes within the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area. Erosion control measures would include the rock slope protection and erosion-control mix on the new slopes. The MCP project will comply with all NPDES permit requirements.

Toxics. The Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines indicate that land uses proposed in proximity to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area that use chemicals or generate bioproducts that may adversely affect wildlife species or water quality are to incorporate measures to ensure that the application of such chemicals does not result in discharge to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area. The Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines also indicate that measures such as those employed to address drainage issues shall be implemented.

During operation and maintenance of the MCP facility, pesticides and/or herbicides may be used to control vegetation and pests within the facility right of way as part of ongoing regular maintenance activities. The application of pesticides and herbicides will comply with existing laws and regulations and will be conducted consistent with Chapter C2, Vegetation Control (2010), in Volume 1 of the Caltrans Maintenance Manual. Those requirements include appropriate control of pesticides and herbicides to avoid drifting of sprays or other materials to property outside the MCP facility right of way limits and to avoid effects on plants and animals outside of the right of way. As a result, the use of pesticides and herbicides during project operations would not result in substantial impacts on biological resources on adjacent properties because the pesticides and herbicides would remain within the MCP facility right of way.

Refer to Sections 3.9, Hydrology and Floodplains, and Section 3.10, Water Quality, and the Drainage subheading above for further details regarding the biofiltration swales and infiltration systems included for the MCP Build Alternatives, including the preferred alternative. These features will reduce

discharge of untreated runoff and remove contaminants from runoff prior to discharge into the MSHCP Conservation Area.

Lighting. The Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines indicate that night lighting is to be directed away from the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area and habitat with long-term conservation values for the Los Angeles pocket mouse, San Bernardino kangaroo rat, and least Bell's vireo, to protect those species from direct night lighting. The Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines also indicate that shielding shall be incorporated in the project design to ensure ambient lighting in the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area is not increased.

Within the MCP study area, existing urban and suburban areas receive light at night from traffic, street lighting, and lighted parking lots; signalization at the intersections and freeway on- and off-ramps; and commercial zone and limited light sources from residential development. Existing lighting on existing streets and the I-215 freeway would be modified or relocated as a part of the MCP project. Safety lighting would also be provided along the MCP in existing developed areas and at interchanges, which are all located outside Public/Quasi-Public lands.

Light and glare would increase as a result of the MCP Build Alternatives, including the preferred alternative in those areas that are currently open space or are rural in character. To minimize light spill into adjoining areas, light fixtures would be designed with hoods that would direct light downward to only those areas requiring illumination for safety purposes. Further, low pressure sodium lights would be used (in compliance with County of Riverside Ordinance No. 655, Regulating Light Pollution for Zone B) for the MCP Build Alternatives.

Refer to Measure NC-4, Design and Construction Management Measures (provided later in this section), and Section 3.7, Visual Aesthetics, for additional details regarding permanent lighting and temporary lighting during nighttime construction activities.

Noise. The Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines indicate that proposed noise-generating land uses affecting the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area are to incorporate setbacks and/or berms, to minimize the effects of noise on Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area

resources pursuant to applicable rules, regulations, and guidelines related to land use noise standards. For planning purposes, wildlife within the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area should not be subjected to noise that would exceed residential noise standards.

In areas where the MCP facility adjoins or bisects the MSHCP Conservation Area, bridges and wildlife crossings have been incorporated into the design to minimize effects to the MSHCP Conservation Area. At Proposed Constrained Linkage 20, Wildlife Crossing No. 10 has been designed for the sole purpose of facilitating wildlife movement between the San Jacinto-Lake Perris Reserve and the Lakeview Mountains. The wildlife crossing entrance will be designed to minimize noise effects to the adjacent MSHCP Conservation Area and ensure that noise effects do not exceed residential noise standards. During final design, RCTC will ensure that the placement of berms between the wildlife crossing entrances, or utilizing solid walls rather than fencing to funnel wildlife into the wildlife crossing, will be considered in order to attenuate noise effects to the MSHCP Conservation Area and in order to comply with "Specific Initial Guidelines for Wildlife Movement Design Considerations within the Criteria Area" of MSHCP Section 7.5.2.

The MCP Build Alternatives, including the preferred alternative, will provide noise barriers where necessary to provide attenuation of substantial adverse noise impacts of the MCP Build Alternatives for existing and approved noise-sensitive land uses. No other barriers are proposed adjacent to conservation areas, as these areas are meant to be kept as open and permeable as possible for wildlife and scenic resources. Noise barriers along the San Jacinto River at Lakeview and in San Jacinto would conflict with other considerations meant to enhance wildlife. Additional studies regarding noise levels at the MSHCP Conservation Area located within the MCP study area were not conducted because the Noise Abatement Criteria (the applicable regulations related to noise standards) apply only to areas with frequent human use. Refer to Section 3.15, Noise, for additional details regarding the MCP project compliance with regulations related to noise standards.

Refer to Measure NC-4, Design and Construction Management Measures, and NC-5, Conservation Areas, for additional details regarding temporary and permanent noise attenuation along the MSHCP Conservation Area.

Invasives. The Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines provides a list of plants that should be avoided adjacent to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area (Table 6-2 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP, which is also summarized in Appendix P of the 2008 NES). For parts of the project that are adjacent to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area, avoidance of these species is to be incorporated into the project design or landscape plans. Considerations in reviewing the applicability of this list shall include proximity of planting areas to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area; species considered in the planting plans; resources being protected within the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area and their relative sensitivity to invasion; and barriers to plant and seed dispersal such as walls, topography, and other features.

During operation and maintenance of the MCP facility, the application of pesticides and herbicides will comply with existing laws and regulations and Chapter C2, Vegetation Control (2010), in Volume 1 of the Caltrans Maintenance Manual, to avoid drifting of sprays or other materials to property outside the MCP facility right of way limits and to avoid effects on plants and animals outside the right of way.

The landscaping for the MCP Build Alternatives, including the preferred alternative, for unpaved areas within the MCP project right of way will focus on native plant species, particularly in areas adjacent to undeveloped land and reserve areas with native plant species. None of the plant species listed in the Western Riverside County MSHCP that should be avoided adjacent to the Conservation Area will be used as part of the landscaping plans. Seed mixtures for parts of the MCP project under Caltrans jurisdiction shall be approved by a Caltrans District Landscape Architect. Refer to Section 3.22, Invasive Species, for additional discussion regarding measures to reduce effects associated with invasive species.

Indirect impacts of the MCP Build Alternatives spreading invasive plant species along a larger facility will be reduced by regular roadside maintenance to remove litter and weeds from the right of way.

Barriers. The Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines indicate that projects should incorporate barriers, where appropriate, to minimize unauthorized

public access, domestic animal predation, illegal trespass, or dumping in the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area. Such barriers may include native landscaping, rocks/boulders, fencing, walls, signage, and/or other appropriate mechanisms.

Permanent fencing will be installed along the right-of-way limits for the entire length of the MCP project, including areas adjacent to MSHCP Conservation Areas. Permanent fencing will be located up to the grading limits at the bridged areas adjacent to MSHCP Conservation Areas and will minimize unauthorized public access, domestic animal predation, illegal trespass, or dumping in the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area.

To reduce impacts resulting from habitat fragmentation within the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area, the MCP project has incorporated design features such as bridges and wildlife crossings that will facilitate habitat connectivity and wildlife movement within the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area.

Grading/Land Development. The Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines require that manufactured slopes associated with proposed site development not extend into the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area. There will not be any manufactured slopes outside of the MCP project footprint.

Compliance with the Western Riverside County MSHCP Best Management Practices, the Siting and Design Criteria, and Construction Guidelines

The MCP Build Alternatives, including the preferred alternative, will implement the following Design and Construction Guidelines provided in the Western Riverside County MSHCP:

- BMPs provided in Appendix C of the Western Riverside County MSHCP
- The Siting and Design Criteria provided in Section 7.5.1 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP
- The Guidelines for Construction of Wildlife Crossings provided in Section 7.5.2 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP.

The MCP project will comply with the following Construction Guidelines provided in the Western Riverside County MSHCP, Section 7.5.3:

- Plans for water pollution and erosion control will be prepared by RCTC. The plans will describe sediment and hazardous materials control, dewatering or diversion structures, fueling and equipment management practices, [and] use of plant material for erosion control. The plans will be reviewed and approved by the County of Riverside and participating jurisdictions prior to construction.
- The timing of construction activities will consider seasonal requirements for breeding birds and migratory nonresident species. Habitat clearing will be avoided during species active breeding season defined as March 1 to June 30.[1]
- Sediment and erosion control measures will be implemented until such time that soils are determined to be successfully stabilized.
- Short-term stream diversions will be accomplished by use of sandbags or other methods that will result in minimal in-stream impacts. Short-term diversions will consider effects on wildlife.
- Silt fencing or other sediment trapping materials will be installed at the downstream end of construction activities to minimize the transport of sediments off site.
- Settling ponds where sediment is collected will be cleaned in a manner that prevents sediment from re-entering the stream or damaging/disturbing adjacent areas. Sediment from settling ponds will be removed to a location where sediment cannot re-enter the stream or surrounding drainage area. Care will be exercised during removal of silt fencing to minimize release of debris or sediment into streams.
- No erodible materials will be deposited into water courses. Brush, loose soils, or other debris material will not be stockpiled within stream channels or on adjacent banks.
- The footprint of disturbance will be minimized to the maximum extent feasible. Access to sites will occur on pre-existing access routes to the greatest extent possible.
- Equipment storage, fueling, and staging areas will be sited on nonsensitive upland habitat types with minimal risk of direct discharge into riparian areas or other sensitive habitat types.

[1] Although this is the date specified in Appendix C of the western Riverside County MSHCP, to comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the breeding season will be defined as February 15 to September 15. Habitat clearing for the MCP project will be conducted from September 16 to February 14.

- The limits of disturbance, including the upstream, downstream, and lateral extents, will be clearly defined and marked in the field. Monitoring personnel will review the limits of disturbance prior to initiation of construction activities.
- During construction, the placement of equipment within the stream or on adjacent banks or adjacent upland habitats occupied by covered species that are outside of the project footprint will be avoided.
- Exotic species removed during construction will be properly handled to prevent sprouting or regrowth.
- Training of construction personnel will be provided.
- Ongoing monitoring and reporting will occur for the duration of the construction activity to ensure implementation of BMPs.
- When work is conducted during the fire season (as identified by the Riverside County Fire Department) adjacent to coastal sage scrub or chaparral vegetation, appropriate firefighting equipment (e.g., extinguishers, shovels, and water tankers) shall be available on site during all phases of project construction to help minimize the chance of human-caused wildfires. Shields, protective mats, and/or other fire prevention methods shall be used during grinding, welding, and other spark-inducing activities. Personnel trained in fire hazards, preventative actions, and responses to fires shall advise contractors regarding fire risk from all construction-related activities.
- Active construction areas shall be watered regularly to control dust and minimize impacts to adjacent vegetation.
- All equipment maintenance, staging, and dispensing of fuel, oil, coolant, or any other toxic substances shall occur only in designated areas within the proposed grading limits of the project site. These designated areas shall be clearly marked and located in such a manner as to contain runoff.
- Waste, dirt, rubble, or trash shall not be deposited in the Conservation Area or on native habitat.

The MCP project, including the preferred alternative, will also comply with the following provisions in Appendix C of the Western Riverside County MSHCP (some of these provisions are very similar to the provisions in Section 7.5.3):

- A qualified biologist shall conduct a training session for project personnel prior to grading. The training shall include a description of the species of concern and its habitats, the general provisions of the Endangered Species Act

(Act) and the MSHCP, the need to adhere to the provisions of the Act and the MSHCP, the penalties associated with violating the provisions of the Act, the general measures that are being implemented to conserve the species of concern as they relate to the project, and the access routes to and project site boundaries within which the project activities must be accomplished.

- Water pollution and erosion control plans shall be developed and implemented in accordance with Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) requirements.
- The footprint of disturbance shall be minimized to the maximum extent feasible. Access to sites shall be via preexisting access routes to the greatest extent possible.
- The upstream and downstream limits of projects disturbance plus lateral limits of disturbance on either side of the stream shall be clearly defined and marked in the field and reviewed by the biologist prior to initiation of work.
- Projects should be designed to avoid the placement of equipment and personnel within the stream channel or on sand and gravel bars, banks, and adjacent upland habitats used by target species of concern.
- Projects that cannot be conducted without placing equipment or personnel in sensitive habitats should be timed to avoid the breeding season of riparian bird species identified in MSHCP Global Species Objective No. 7.
- When stream flows must be diverted, the diversions shall be conducted using sandbags or other methods requiring minimal in stream impacts. Silt fencing or other sediment trapping materials shall be installed at the downstream end of construction activity to minimize the transport of sediments off site. Settling ponds where sediment is collected shall be cleaned out in a manner that prevents the sediment from reentering the stream. Care shall be exercised when removing silt fences, as feasible, to prevent debris or sediment from returning to the stream.
- Equipment storage, fueling, and staging areas shall be located on upland sites with minimal risks of direct drainage into riparian areas or other sensitive habitats. These designated areas shall be located in such a manner as to prevent any runoff from entering sensitive habitat. Necessary precautions shall be taken to prevent the release of cement or other toxic substances into surface waters. Project related spills of hazardous materials shall be reported to appropriate entities including but not limited to applicable jurisdictional city, USFWS, CDFW, and RWQCB and shall be cleaned up immediately and contaminated soils removed to approved disposal areas.

- Erodible fill material shall not be deposited into water courses. Brush, loose soils, or other similar debris material shall not be stockpiled within the stream channel or on its banks.
- The qualified project biologist shall monitor construction activities for the duration of the project to ensure that practicable measures are being employed to avoid incidental disturbance of habitat and species of concern outside the project footprint.
- The removal of native vegetation shall be avoided and minimized to the maximum extent practicable. Temporary impacts shall be returned to preexisting contours and revegetated with appropriate native species.
- Exotic species that prey upon or displace target species of concern should be permanently removed from the site to the extent feasible.
- To avoid attracting predators of the species of concern, the project site shall be kept as clean of debris as possible. All food related trash items shall be enclosed in sealed containers and regularly removed from the site(s).
- Construction employees shall strictly limit their activities, vehicles, equipment, and construction materials to the proposed project footprint and designated staging areas and routes of travel. The construction area(s) shall be the minimal area necessary to complete the project and shall be specified in the construction plans. Construction limits will be fenced with orange snow screen. Exclusion fencing should be maintained until the completion of all construction activities. Employees shall be instructed that their activities are restricted to the construction areas.
- RCTC shall have the right to access and inspect any sites of approved projects including any restoration/enhancement area for compliance with project approval conditions including these BMPs.

Adherence to Western Riverside County MSHCP Section 6.4-Fuels Management

As a covered activity, the MCP project will comply with and implement the fuels management guidelines in Section 6.4 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP.

Fuels management focuses on hazard reduction for humans and their properties. Fuels management for human safety will be conducted in a manner that is compatible with public safety and conservation of biological resources. Fuels management for human hazard reduction involves reducing fuel loads in areas where fire may threaten human safety or property, suppressing fires once they have started, and providing access for fire suppression equipment and personnel.

It is recognized that brush management to reduce fuel loads and protect urban uses and public health and safety shall occur where development (including roadways such as the MCP project) is adjacent to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area.

The following scenarios related to brush management adjacent to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area are pertinent to the MCP project, including the preferred alternative:

- Where existing reserves occur adjacent to existing developed areas, the brush management zone may encroach into the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area.
- Where Reserve Assembly proceeds adjacent to existing developed areas, Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area boundaries should be established to avoid such encroachment wherever possible. When acquiring lands for the MCP project, RCTC shall evaluate fire management issues.
- In accordance with existing policies, brush management shall be incorporated in the MCP project boundaries and shall not encroach into the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area.

Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area

The Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area would be affected by all of the MCP Build Alternatives, including the preferred alternative. As previously stated, the Conservation Area comprises existing conservation lands (Public/Quasi-Public), as well as the 153,000 acres of Additional Reserve Lands that will be acquired within the Western Riverside County MSHCP Criteria Area and set aside for conservation through the development/entitlement process. The Western Riverside County MSHCP cell criteria determine the amount of conservation that will be required in order to meet the conservation goals of the Western Riverside County MSHCP. Public/Quasi-Public lands, which are the foundations upon which the Conservation Area is built and which are affected by the project, include the existing habitat conserved for the Stephens' kangaroo rat, which includes the San Jacinto Wildlife Area.

The Western Riverside County MSHCP planning process included evaluations of planned roadways with respect to conservation of biological resources and in the context of the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area. The MCP project is the east-west Community and Environmental Transportation

Acceptability Process (CETAP) Corridor for the Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore Transportation Corridor. Impacts resulting from this CETAP Corridor to the criteria area and Public/Quasi-Public lands were taken into account during the preparation of the Western Riverside County MSHCP and conservation requirements. Sections 7.2.2 and 7.3.5 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP outline guidelines for planned roadways to ensure that planned roadways are consistent with the Western Riverside County MSHCP conservation objectives. The MCP Build Alternatives are consistent with the Covered Activities/Planned Roads in Section 7, and the MCP Project is, therefore, a Covered Activity and a Covered Road, as documented in the MCP MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis (provided in Appendix T). According to the Western Riverside County MSHCP, Section 7.3.5, Planned Roads Through the Criteria Area, in the subsection titled CETAP Corridors on page 7-38:

"The estimated width of areas considered for the CETAP Corridors ranged between approximately 500 and 1,000 feet. The facilities will potentially include the following elements:

- Three mixed-flow lanes in each direction;
- One HOV lane in each direction;
- Shoulders at Caltrans standards for freeways;
- Medians of sufficient width to accommodate Caltrans standard median widths, including an exclusive transit way, either rail or bus;
- Buffer areas and areas for utilities; [and]
- Interchanges at locations to be identified."

The modified MCP project is a shortened version of Alternative 1 (one of the two east-west CETAP alternatives for the Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore Corridors) that was analyzed in the Western Riverside County MSHCP. As discussed in the subsection, "Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore," on page 7-40 of Section 7.3.5 in the Western Riverside County MSHCP, the alignment of this alternative was as follows:

- Eastern terminus at Sanderson Avenue and Ramona Expressway; and
- Generally following Ramona Expressway west to I-215.

The Western Riverside County MSHCP anticipated this Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore CETAP Alternative 1 to then continue west with the western terminus at the Cajalco Road/I-15 interchange. The segment from I-215 to I-15 is not a part of the modified MCP project, as discussed earlier in Section 2.2.1.1, Development of the Modified MCP Alternatives, starting on page 2-6 in Chapter 2, Project Alternatives.

Additionally, as identified in Table 7-8, Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore Alternative 1B Impacts to Vegetation Communities Occurring within Criteria Area, in the Western Riverside County MSHCP, the Western Riverside County MSHCP anticipated impacts in the Criteria Area to total 580 acres, consisting of 190 acres of grassland; 40 acres of playa and vernal pools; and 30 acres of riparian scrub, woodland, and forest.

The MCP project is a Western Riverside County MSHCP Covered Activity, and as described above, this project was expected to be located in the Western Riverside County MSHCP plan area and through the Criteria Area. Therefore, the impacts of the MCP project were already considered when the Western Riverside County MSHCP was adopted in 2003.

This section describes the impacts to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area, criteria cells, and Public/Quasi-Public lands.

Table 3.17.H summarizes the total impacts to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Criteria Area from implementation of the MCP Build Alternatives (refer also to Figure 3.17.1). All MCP Build Alternatives design variations would have similar impacts to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Criteria Area (ranging from 195.0 ac for Alternatives 4 Modified and 9 Modified to 197.2 ac with Alternative 5 Modified SJRB DV). As shown in Table 3.17.H, the preferred alternative would impact 217.8 acres of the Criteria Area.

The Western Riverside County MSHCP requires conservation of only those portions of the cells that meet the criteria for conservation. Therefore, the impacts summarized in Table 3.17.H are a worst-case estimate of impacts to the entire Western Riverside County MSHCP Criteria Area without taking into account conservation goals specified in the Western Riverside County MSHCP for each criteria cell. Section 3.2, Relationship to Reserve Assembly/Criteria Area, in the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination including

Table 3.17.H Impacts to Western Riverside County MSHCP Criteria Area

Alternative/Design Variation	Impacts (ac)[1]
Alternative 4 Modified	195.0
Alternative 4 Modified SJN DV	196.1
Alternative 4 Modified SJRB DV	197.1
Alternative 5 Modified	195.1
Alternative 5 Modified SJN DV	196.2
Alternative 5 Modified SJRB DV	197.2
Alternative 9 Modified	195.0
Alternative 9 Modified SJN DV	196.1
Alternative 9 Modified SJRB DV	197.1
Preferred Alternative (Alternative 9 Modified SJRB DV	**217.8**

Source: *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* (December 2011) and the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (September 2014) provided in Appendix T.

[1] Acreages include temporary and permanent impacts throughout the MCP project footprint.

ac = acres
MSHCP = Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan
SJN DV = San Jacinto North Design Variation
SJRB DV = San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variation

Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation, in Appendix T of this EIR/EIS, shows the impacts of the preferred alternative on the Criteria Area (the impacts of the other Build Alternatives are very similar to the impacts of the preferred alternative). Section 3.2 also provides a detailed discussion of the Criteria Area and specific cells and cell groups within the project footprint and how the project would:

- Not prevent or preclude the ability of lands to be conserved in accordance with the criteria for criteria areas; or
- Not substantially impact the conservation goals or functions of linkages with implementation of mitigation discussed in the MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation, in Appendix T.

The MCP project impacts to the Criteria Area are covered by the Western Riverside County MSHCP because the MCP project is a Covered Activity. The Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area consists of existing Core

Areas and Linkages, as well as new conservation areas (proposed Cores, proposed Linkages, and proposed extensions to existing Cores) that would be assembled from the Criteria Area based upon these criteria cell conservation goals. More detailed estimates of MCP project impacts to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area are summarized in Tables 3.17.I and 3.17.J.

In Table 3.17.I, Impacts to Western Riverside County MSHCP Cores and Linkages, impacts to parts of the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area are expressed as ranges derived from the conservation goals of the corresponding criteria cells. It is important to note that Covered Roads, such as the MCP project, were anticipated by the MSHCP to be constructed through the Conservation Area. Thus, the acreages of impacts associated with the Covered Roads, including the MCP project preferred alternative, have been accounted for in the design of the MSHCP reserve.

Table 3.17.I Impacts to Western Riverside County MSHCP Cores and Linkages (acres)[1]

Alternative/ Design Variation	Existing Core H	Proposed Constrained Linkage 20	Existing Constrained Linkage C	Proposed Extension of Existing Core 4	Noncontiguous Habitat Block 5
Alt 4 Mod	0.2	12–13	2–3	41–42	9.0
Alt 4 Mod SJN DV	0.2	12–13	2–3	41–42	9.0
Alt 4 Mod SJRB DV	0.2	12–13	2–3	43–44	9.0
Alt 5 Mod	0.2	12–13	2–3	41–42	9.0
Alt 5 Mod SJN DV	0.2	12–13	2–3	41–42	9.0
Alt 5 Mod SJRB DV	0.2	12–13	2–3	43–44	9.0
Alt 9 Mod	0.2	12–13	2–3	41–42	9.0
Alt 9 Mod SJN DV	0.2	12–13	2–3	41–42	9.0
Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV	0.2	12–13	2–3	43–44	9.0
Preferred Alternative (Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV)	**0.0**	**12–13**	**2–3**	**43–44**	**8.0–9.0**

Source: *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* (December 2011) and the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (September 2014) provided in Appendix T.

[1] Acreages include temporary and permanent impacts throughout the project footprint, including the MCP/SR-79 interchange footprint.

Alt = Alternative
MCP = Mid County Parkway
Mod = Modified
SJN DV = San Jacinto North Design Variation
SJRB DV = San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variation
SR-79 = State Route 79

Table 3.17.J Impacts to Western Riverside County MSHCP Public/Quasi-Public Lands (acres)[1]

Alternative/Design Variation	Cropland	Dairy	Lake/Pond	Developed/ Ruderal	Riversidean Upland Sage Scrub	Nonnative Grassland	Alkali Grassland	Marsh	Riparian Forest	Riparian Scrub	TOTAL IMPACTS
Alt 4 Mod	2.51	0	0	2.40	0	3.15	0.069	0	0	0	8.13
Alt 4 Mod SJN DV	2.51	0	0	2.40	0	3.15	0.069	0	0	0	8.13
Alt 4 Mod SJRB DV	2.51	0	0	2.40	0	3.15	0.069	0	0	0	8.13
Alt 5 Mod	1.06	0	0	0.93	0	3.15	0.002	0	0	0	5.15
Alt 5 Mod SJN DV	1.06	0	0	0.93	0	3.15	0.002	0	0	0	5.15
Alt 5 Mod SJRB DV	1.06	0	0	0.93	0	3.15	0.002	0	0	0	5.15
Alt 9 Mod	0	0	0	1.46	0	3.15	0.009	0	0	0	4.62
Alt 9 Mod SJN DV	0	0	0	1.46	0	3.15	0.009	0	0	0	4.62
Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV	0	0	0	1.46	0	3.15	0.009	0	0	0	4.62
Preferred Alternative (Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV)	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1.40**	**0**	**0**	**0.06**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1.46**

Source: *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* (December 2011) and the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (September 2014) provided in Appendix T.

[1] Acreages include temporary and permanent impacts. No parts overlap the SR-79 Realignment Project.

Alt = Alternative
Mod = Modified
MSHCP = Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan
SJN DV = San Jacinto North Design Variation
SJRB DV = San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variation
SR-79 = State Route 79

The SJRB DV for all MCP Build Alternatives would have the greatest impact to Western Riverside County MSHCP Cores and Linkages. The SJN DV and base case designs for all MCP Build Alternatives would have the least impacts. The primary differences in impacts between the SJRB DV occur at the Proposed Extension of Existing Core 4, which is located along the San Jacinto River/SJWA.

The total impacts of the MCP project to the Criteria Area that will form the Additional Reserve Land and associated Cores and Linkages, as summarized above in Table 3.17.I, range from 64 to 69 acres, depending on the Build Alternative. All the Build Alternatives would impact a substantially reduced amount of Criteria Area from the 580 acres accounted for in the Western Riverside County MSHCP, for the following reasons:

- The MCP Modified Build Alternatives consist of a 220-foot-wide corridor rather than the 500 to 1,000-foot-wide corridor considered in the Western Riverside County MSHCP; and
- The MCP Modified Build Alternatives do not include the western half of the CETAP Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore Corridor between I-15 and I-215.

Table 3.17.J, Impacts to Western Riverside County MSHCP Public and Quasi-Public Lands is an overall summary of impacts to Public/Quasi-Public lands. Impacts to Public/Quasi-Public lands include both temporary and permanent impacts. There are two locations of Public/Quasi-Public lands within the BSA: (1) in the vicinity of the Perris Valley Storm Drain, and (2) in the SJWA, as shown earlier on Figure 3.17.1. As shown on Figure 3.17-1, all Build Alternatives, including the preferred alternative, impact PQP lands along the Perris Valley Storm Drain. However, as discussed in the MSHCP Consistency Determination in Appendix T, there will be no permanent functional loss of PQP lands at the Perris Valley Storm Drain as a result of those effects of the Build Alternatives. The preferred alternative is south of and outside the PQP lands in the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. Table 3.17.J shows impacts to Public/Quasi-Public lands (with a breakdown by vegetation type) as defined by the Western Riverside County MSHCP. Alternative 9 Modified (the preferred alternative) would have the least impact to Public/Quasi-Public lands, followed by Alternative 5 Modified. Alternative 4 Modified would have the greatest impact to Public/Quasi-Public lands.

The MCP project may result in indirect effects related to habitat fragmentation within existing reserves and proposed Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Areas. Indirect effects of the MCP project on habitat within these areas may result from edge effects, such as exotic plant and animal infestations, litter, fire, unauthorized recreational use, and pollutants associated with vehicle use of the parkway. Indirect effects may result from an increase in fire frequency, which may result in type conversion of native habitats and an increase of exotic plant species. Type conversions from more open native habitat to more dense nonnative grasslands could reduce the area of potential sensitive species habitat. The MCP project may provide additional access points for unauthorized off-road vehicle use, which may destroy native habitat and sensitive species and may also promote exotic plant infestation. Additionally, pollutants (in the form of nitrogen compounds from car emissions) may settle on the soil and stimulate the growth of nonnative species that may out-compete native species. Future development and use of the MCP may result in additional litter. Litter may also result in animal infestations, which may result in additional predators in the area that may prey on the listed species. Litter or dumping that may occur in proximity or within the existing or proposed conservation areas may also increase the management needs of the existing reserve for removal of trash. Compliance with Section 6.1.4 of the MSHCP, discussed above, would address these indirect impacts.

As discussed below, project consistency with the Western Riverside County MSHCP has been documented based on the preferred alternative (Alternative 9 Modified with the SJRB DV) through completion of the Joint Project Review process with the Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) and Wildlife Agencies (USFWS and CDFW). The analysis presented here is based on the MSHCP consistency analysis provided with the Joint Project Review application to the RCA. The DBESPs described earlier were also submitted with the Joint Project Review materials. The RCA reviewed and issued its concurrence determination when it issued the Joint Project Review to the Wildlife Agencies. Refer to Appendix T in this Final EIR/EIS which contains the following:

- Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis (September 2014)
- Regional Conservation Authority Joint Project Review (October 2014)
- Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis Addendum (October 2014)

- MSHCP Consistency Determination Letter from USFWS and CDFW (November 14, 2014)

Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat

The MCP project is in the vicinity of the Habitat Conservation Plan Area for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat fee area. Specifically, the BSA includes part of one core reserve, however, Alternative 4 Modified, Alternative 5 Modified, and Alternative 9 Modified will not directly impact that core reserve.

Additionally, construction of transportation improvement projects is identified as a covered activity in the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat. Therefore, the MCP project is consistent with the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat and its associated implementing agreement and permit.

As shown on Figure 3.17.2, Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Reserves, the reserve lands of the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat are not within the MCP project footprint, but a 1.5-mile segment of the MCP project is located approximately 200 ft south of the San Jacinto-Lake Perris Reserve. This area may be subject to an increase in light and glare associated with nighttime construction and future nighttime operations (i.e., vehicle headlights). There will be no permanent lighting along the MCP facility except for safety lighting at interchanges. Indirect effects of the MCP project on habitat within the San Jacinto-Lake Perris Reserve may result from edge effects such as exotic plant and animal infestations, litter, fire, unauthorized recreational use, and pollutants associated with vehicle use of the freeway. Indirect effects may result from an increase in fire frequency, which may result in type conversion of native habitats and an increase of exotic plant species. Type conversions from more open native habitat to more dense nonnative grasslands could reduce the area of potential sensitive species habitat. The MCP project may provide additional access points for unauthorized off-road vehicle use, which may destroy native habitat and sensitive species and may also promote exotic plant infestation. Additionally, pollutants (in the form of nitrogen compounds from car emissions) may settle on the soil and stimulate growth of nonnative species, which may out-compete native species. Construction and operation of the MCP may result in additional litter. Litter may also result in animal infestations, which may result in additional predators in the area that may prey on the listed species. Litter or dumping in

proximity or within the San Jacinto-Lake Perris Reserve may also increase the management needs of the existing reserve for removal of trash.

Edge effects resulting from an increase in light and glare associated with safety lighting at interchanges will be reduced by incorporating shielded lighting near environmentally sensitive areas.

Indirect impacts to the San Jacinto-Lake Perris Reserve will be minimized by reducing edge effects by following the Guidelines pertaining to the Urban/Wildlands Interface in the Western Riverside County MSHCP, Section 6.1.4. Indirect impacts of exotic plant infestations, litter, and fire will be reduced by regular roadside maintenance to remove litter and weeds from the right of way.

The status of the Stephens' kangaroo rat and the effects of implementing the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat were previously addressed in the USFWS Biological Opinion, dated May 2, 1996. In the Biological Opinion for the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat, it was concluded that the level of anticipated take in the plan area for this Habitat Conservation Plan was not likely to result in jeopardy to Stephens' kangaroo rat. Given the MCP project is consistent with the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat, it is not anticipated that there would be any adverse effects to Stephens' kangaroo rat that were not previously evaluated in the Biological Opinion for the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat. No incidental take of Stephens' kangaroo rat beyond that anticipated in the Biological Opinion for the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat will occur. Refer to Section 3.21, Threatened and Endangered Species, for additional discussion regarding the Stephens' kangaroo rat.

No Build Alternatives

Under Alternative 1A, the MCP project would not be constructed. The future west-east traffic described in the study area would be served by the existing Ramona Expressway between I-215 and SR-79. Planned improvements in the regional and local circulation system would be constructed, as accounted for in the adopted Riverside County General Plan, the RCTC's Measure A program, and other adopted plans and policies.

Under Alternative 1B, the planned street network would be developed according to the Circulation Element of the Riverside County General Plan, including improvements to the Ramona Expressway.

Impacts related to a footprint were not calculated for the No Build Alternatives; therefore, a qualitative analysis of the permanent effects of Alternatives 1A and 1B is presented here. Alternative 1A would generally result in fewer impacts to natural communities in the MCP study area than any of the MCP Build Alternatives because the MCP project would not be built and no improvements would be made to the Ramona Expressway. Alternative 1B would also generally result in fewer impacts than the MCP Build Alternatives because it would improve the Ramona Expressway consistent with the Circulation Element of the Riverside County General Plan, and the improved Ramona Expressway would have a smaller project footprint than the MCP project.

3.17.3.2 Temporary Impacts

Temporary impacts to natural communities may occur during construction where habitats are temporarily disturbed during grading or other activities. Refer to Sections 3.20, Animal Species, and 3.21, Threatened and Endangered Species, for a discussion of temporary construction impacts to species covered under the Western Riverside County MSHCP.

For the purposes of this impact analysis, a conservative (i.e., worst-case) right-of-way footprint was established for each alternative that includes areas of cut-and-fill, staging areas for construction vehicles, equipment and materials, haul routes, and water quality treatment features. While some part of this right-of-way footprint would only be temporarily disturbed during construction and would be revegetated with native plant species, it is not expected that this revegetation would fully restore the functions and values of the affected habitat. Therefore, as discussed earlier in Section 3.17.3.1, Permanent Impacts, the analysis of impacts conservatively estimates a worst-case impact scenario wherein all areas within the right-of-way footprint are calculated as permanent impacts, with the exception of areas spanned by bridges. Temporary impacts, as well as permanent impacts to riparian habitats and jurisdictional areas, have been identified at bridged areas.

Impacts were calculated with the assumption that the majority of bridged areas would be temporarily affected due to construction access within the right of way. For the preliminary MCP project design used as the basis for this impact analysis, bridge support structures were designed to be outside of jurisdictional areas as much as possible. However, because all specific locations of the bridge support structures have not been finalized, permanent impacts were calculated conservatively at 10 percent, with the remaining 90 percent of the bridged areas calculated as temporary impacts.

Based on typical footprints of other bridge projects, permanent impacts are likely to be less than 10 percent of the area spanned by the bridge, but to provide a conservative estimate, the bridge supports are estimated to affect 10 percent of the bridge footprint.

Typically, temporary impacts also include a buffer around bridged areas, extending to the MCP project footprint, for the construction of bridge structures. Additional areas, based on grading plans, which the project engineer determined would be avoided or would consist of temporary impacts, were also assessed individually for each bridge location. These bridges are summarized in the table "Mid County Parkway – Summary of Bridge Descriptions and Avoidance of Jurisdictional Areas" in Appendix I (Attachment D). Temporary impacts to Western Riverside County MSHCP riparian/riverine areas by alternative are provided in Table 3.17.K.

3.17.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The greatest areas of avoidance and minimization of impacts to the natural environment proposed by the MCP project have already occurred during the design of wildlife crossings, as required under the Western Riverside County MSHCP (and as previously discussed in the Wildlife Crossing section in Section 3.17.3).

Direct and indirect impacts to the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area, at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, the Perris Valley Storm Drain, and the San Jacinto River, will be minimized by reducing edge effects to preserved habitat by following the Western Riverside County MSHCP Guidelines pertaining to the Urban/Wildlands Interface. Indirect impacts of exotic plant infestations, litter, and fire will be reduced by regular roadside maintenance to remove litter and weeds from the right of way.

During operation of the MCP facility, the application of pesticides and herbicides would comply with existing laws and regulations and Chapter C2, Vegetation Control (2010), in Volume 1 of the Caltrans Maintenance Manual, to avoid drifting of sprays or other materials to property outside the MCP facility right of way limits and to avoid effects on plants and animals outside the right of way, including existing and proposed conservation areas adjacent to the project right of way limits within the project footprint and in the immediately surrounding areas and will designate those areas on the project.

Table 3.17.K Temporary Impacts to Riparian/Riverine Areas (acres), excluding SR-79 Realignment Impacts[1]

Alternative/ Design Variation	Marsh	Riparian Forest	Riparian Scrub	CDFW Jurisdictional Areas without Marsh, Riparian Forest, or Riparian Scrub	Total Area
Alt 4 Mod	0.07	0.91	0.49	4.95	6.42
Alt 4 Mod SJN DV	0.07	0.54	0.21	3.62	4.44
Alt 4 Mod SJRB DV	0.07	0.91	0.49	4.95	6.42
Alt 5 Mod	0.07	0.91	0.49	3.50	4.97
Alt 5 Mod SJN DV	0.07	0.54	0.21	2.16	2.98
Alt 5 Mod SJRB DV	0.07	0.91	0.49	3.50	4.97
Alt 9 Mod	0.07	0.91	0.49	4.16	5.63
Alt 9 Mod SJN DV	0.07	0.54	0.21	2.83	3.65
Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV	0.07	0.91	0.49	4.16	5.63
Preferred Alternative (Alt 9 Mod SJRB DV)	**0.03**	**1.62**	**0.29**	**1.69**	**3.63**

Source: *Supplement to the Natural Environment Study* (December 2011) and the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (September 2014) provided in Appendix T.

[1] Includes temporary impacts (i.e., associated with bridges) to all areas mapped as Marsh, Riparian Forest, and Riparian scrub, and all CDFW jurisdictional areas, including streambeds lacking riparian vegetation. Excludes impacts to riparian/riverine areas that are within the MCP/SR-79 interchange footprint, which are wholly attributable to the SR-79 Realignment Project (i.e., jurisdictional and riparian/riverine areas that will be affected by the SR-79 project prior to construction of MCP and will be mitigated by the SR-79 Realignment Project).

Alt = Alternative
CDFW = California Department of Fish and Wildlife
MCP = Mid County Parkway
Mod = Modified
SJN DV = San Jacinto North Design Variation
SJRB DV = San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variation
SR-79 = State Route 79

Mitigation for impacts to HCPs will be achieved through compliance with provisions of the Western Riverside County MSHCP and the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat. The Western Riverside County MSHCP was conceived and developed and is being implemented specifically to address the direct, indirect, cumulative, and growth-related effects on species and habitats from activities covered by the Western Riverside County MSHCP, including the MCP project. These same requirements would apply to the MCP Build Alternatives.

Since the publication of the Recirculated Draft EIR/Supplemental Draft EIS in January 2013, the following actions have occurred:

- RCTC completed the Joint Project Review process with the Western Riverside County RCA by preparing a Western Riverside County MSHCP Consistency Analysis. As described earlier, that Consistency Analysis was completed and is provided in Appendix T. That Consistency Analysis includes analysis of consistency with Sections 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.1.4, and 6.3.2 of the MSHCP. The Consistency Analysis also addresses Sections 6.4, 7.5.3, and Appendix C to reduce edge effects on the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area, to ensure Best Management Practices (BMPs) are followed during construction, and to ensure vegetation is removed outside of nesting season.
- RCTC completed a Western Riverside County MSHCP Section 3.2.1 Equivalency Determination for the replacement of Public/Quasi-Public lands. As discussed in Section 3.3, Impacts to PQP Lands, in the MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis (September 2014) provided in Appendix T of this Final EIR/EIS, temporary impacts (expected to take less than 6 months) associated with the bridge construction over the PQP Lands at the Perris Valley Storm Drain will not affect the conservation value of these PQP Lands. No equivalency analysis for PQP Lands loss is required for the project because there will be no permanent loss of conservation value to PQP Lands.
- A determination of the MCP project's consistency with the Western Riverside County MSHCP has been documented through completion of the Joint Project Review process with the Western Riverside County RCA and the Wildlife Agencies (the USFWS and the CDFW). The RCA reviewed the RCTC consistency determination provided in Appendix T and issued a concurrence determination with the Joint Project Review, which is also provided in Appendix T, along with the letter of concurrence from the Wildlife Agencies.

In addition to the measures committed to in the MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis (September 2014) and the Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis Addendum (October 2014) provided in Appendix T of this Final EIR/EIS. Measures NC-1 through NC-6 below will be incorporated to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate impacts of the MCP project to natural plant communities of special concern. Additional measures committed to by RCTC as part of the DBESPs for impacts to San Jacinto Valley crownscale, smooth tarplant, Coulter's goldfields,

spreading navarretia, burrowing owl, least Bell's vireo, Los Angeles pocket mouse, and San Bernardino kangaroo rat are described in Sections 3.19, Plant Species, 3.20, Animal Species, and 3.21, Threatened and Endangered Species.

NC-1 **Project Biologist (Design).** Prior to the initiation of final design, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) Project Manager will require the design contractor to have a Project Biologist under contract. The Project Biologist will ensure that all vegetation removal, seasonal restrictions, Best Management Practices (BMPs), environmentally sensitive areas, and all biological resources avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures are properly included in the project design and specifications. Additional levels of biological monitors, such as qualified/authorized biologists for monitoring listed species, and general biological monitors, will also be used as needed to ensure that mitigation measures are properly implemented during the project design.

Project Biologist (Construction). Prior to the initiation of any site preparation or disturbance activities, the RCTC Project Manager will require the Construction Contractor to have a Project Biologist under contract. The Project Biologist will ensure that all vegetation removal, seasonal restrictions, BMPs, environmentally sensitive areas, and all biological resources avoidance and minimization measures are properly implemented by the Construction Contractor as required in the project design and specifications. Additional levels of biological monitors, such as qualified/authorized biologists for monitoring listed species, and general biological monitors, will also be used as needed to ensure that mitigation measures are properly implemented during construction.

NC-2 **Environmentally Sensitive Areas.** During final design, the RCTC Project Engineer and RCTC Project Biologist will coordinate to identify areas within the project right of way footprint but outside the project disturbance and grading limits which include, but are not limited to, riparian/riverine vegetation, San Jacinto River alkali communities, and areas with long-term conservation values for the San Jacinto Valley crownscale, spreading navarretia, Coulter's goldfields, smooth tarplant, least Bell's vireo, burrowing owl, Los Angeles pocket

mouse, San Bernardino kangaroo rat, and protected waters. Those areas will be designated by the RCTC Project Engineer on the project plans and specifications as environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs).

The RCTC Project Engineer will label each ESA on the project plans and specifications as an ESA but will not identify the specific biological resources within each ESA.

The RCTC Project Engineer will ensure that the project plans and specifications include the following specific requirements of and directions for the Construction Contractor and the RCTC Project Biologist regarding the ESAs:

- Prior to any site preparation, grading, clearing, or construction, the Construction Contractor will be required to hold training sessions conducted by the RCTC Project Biologist to ensure that all construction workers understand the purpose of, and requirements and restrictions related to, the ESAs.
- Prior to any site preparation, grading, clearing, or construction, the RCTC Resident Engineer will require the Construction Contractor, assisted by the RCTC Project Biologist, to install highly visible barriers (such as orange construction fencing) around all designated ESAs.
- No disturbance, grading, staging, parking, materials or equipment storage, fill structures, dumping, or other construction-related activities will be permitted within or immediately adjacent to the ESAs at any time.
- All construction equipment will be operated and all construction activities will be conducted at all times in a manner so as to prevent accidental damage to or intrusion into ESAs.
- No construction equipment or worker vehicles are to enter any ESA at any time.
- The Construction Contractor must maintain all ESA barriers throughout all the site preparation, disturbance, grading, and construction activities in the vicinity of the ESAs.
- The RCTC Project Biologist will verify the integrity of the ESA barriers on a regular basis (no less than once every 2 weeks and

more often if needed) and will report the need for any repair or replacement of barriers to the RCTC Resident Engineer that day.

- The RCTC Resident Engineer and RCTC Project Biologist will require the Construction Contractor to repair damaged or replace missing ESA barriers within 24 hours of being notified of the status of the ESA barriers needing repair or replacement.
- During all site preparation, clearing, disturbance, and construction activities, the RCTC Project Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to ensure that equipment maintenance, site lighting, equipment and materials staging, and equipment and worker vehicles are limited to designated areas away from ESAs.
- In the event that an ESA barrier is breached by any construction worker, equipment, or activity, the Construction Contractor is to cease work in that area immediately and report the breach to the RCTC Resident Engineer immediately.
- The RCTC Resident Engineer and RCTC Project Biologist will review the breach and will assess the effects of the breach on the resource protected by that ESA. Any breached areas will be restored to the original condition. If the breach affects resources protected by the ESA, the RCTC Resident Engineer and RCTC Project Biologist will coordinate with the applicable resource agencies (USACE, CDFW, or RCA) to determine if additional mitigation would be required.
- When all construction activities in the vicinity of an ESA are complete and there will be no more construction activity in that area, the RCTC Resident Engineer and the RCTC Project Biologist will direct the Construction Contractor to remove the ESA barrier at that location.

NC-3 **Nesting Birds.** To avoid effects to raptors and nesting birds, the RCTC Project Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to conduct any native or exotic vegetation removal or tree trimming activities outside of the nesting bird season (i.e., February 15 to September 15).

In the event that vegetation clearing is necessary during the nesting season (i.e., February 15 to September 15), the RCTC Resident Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to have the Project

Biologist conduct a preconstruction survey within a 300-foot (ft) buffer of project activities to identify the locations of listed and nonlisted bird and raptor nests within 3 days of the commencement of construction activities. In addition, if any trees are scheduled to be removed between January 15 and February 15, a preconstruction raptor specific survey would be required prior to removal of any trees. Should nesting birds be found, the RCTC Resident Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to establish a 300 ft exclusionary buffer around the nest developed in consultation among the RCTC Resident Engineer, the RCTC Contract Biologist, the Construction Contractor, and the Project Biologist. This 300 ft exclusionary buffer will be clearly marked in the field by construction personnel under guidance of the Project Biologist, and construction or clearing will not be conducted within this buffer zone until the Project Biologist determines that the young have fledged or the nest is no longer active.

NC-4 **Design and Construction Management Measures.** During final design, the RCTC Project Engineer and the Contract Biologist will coordinate with the Design Contractor and the Project Biologist to develop design and construction management specifications to direct temporary construction noise, nighttime construction lighting, and permanent facility lighting away from the wildlife corridors, biologically sensitive areas, the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Conservation Areas, and vegetated drainages. Those specifications will be included in the final design.

If construction work must be done at night, the RCTC Resident Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to properly implement the specifications included in the final design to direct temporary construction noise and lighting away from the wildlife movement corridors, and biologically sensitive areas during those nighttime construction activities.

During construction, the RCTC Resident Engineer will ensure that the Construction Contractor properly implements the permanent facility lighting, directing the light from wildlife movement corridors,

biologically sensitive areas, the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Areas, and vegetated drainages.

NC-5 **Conservation Areas.** During final design, the RCTC Project Engineer and the Contract Biologist will coordinate to identify existing and proposed conservation areas within the project footprint and in the immediately surrounding areas and will designate those areas on the project specifications. The Contract Biologist will provide the RCTC Resident Engineer with the applicable guidelines from the Western Riverside County MSHCP, including the Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines from Section 6.1.4 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP and compliance with these guidelines as identified in Section 3.17.3 of the Final EIR/EIS, for incorporation in the project specifications.

To reduce impacts where the project interfaces with existing or proposed conservation areas as shown on the project specifications, the RCTC Resident Engineer will require the construction contractor to comply with the applicable guidelines from the Western Riverside County MSHCP, including the Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines from Section 6.1.4 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP, as included in the project specifications.

During final design, the RCTC Project Engineer and Project Biologist will ensure the design for the wildlife crossing entrance at Wildlife Crossing No. 10 will minimize noise effects to the adjacent MSHCP Conservation Area and ensure that noise effects do not exceed residential noise standards.

The Recirculated Draft EIR/Supplemental Draft EIS included Measure NC-6, which required the preparation of a DBESP for impacts to riparian and riverine resources pursuant to Sections 6.1.2 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP. That measure was satisfied based on completion of the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Consistency Determination and the Regional Conservation Authority Joint Project Review for the MCP project (both provided in Appendix T of this Final EIR/EIS). As a result, that part of Measure NC-6 is no longer required for the MCP project. The DBESP for the effects of the preferred alternative on riparian and riverine resources provides specific actions and measures to address those effects,

based in part on the actions discussed in Measure NC-6 in the Recirculated Draft EIR/ Supplemental Draft EIS related to on- and off-site mitigation activities.

Measure NC-1 in the Recirculated Draft EIR/Supplemental Draft EIS also included a requirement regarding conservation of off-site mitigation areas in perpetuity; that part of Measure NC-1 is still applicable and is included as Measure TE-1 later in Section 3.21, Threatened and Endangered Species.

Because part of original Measure NC-6 has been superseded by the DBESP for riparian and riverine resources and replaced by Measure TE-1 later in Section 3.21, Measure NC-6 is not needed for the preferred alternative.

In their comments on the MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis (September 2014); USFWS and CDFW requested that RCTC consider adding a measure to minimize impacts to riverine-alkaline communities in the San Jacinto River floodplain by salvaging the top layer of alkali soils that would be graded as part of MCP project construction and then using those soils in areas proposed for habitat restoration. In response to this request, RCTC will implement minimization measure NC-6 as described below.

NC-6 **Salvage of Alkali Soils**. During final design, the RCTC Project Engineer will have the Project Biologist map all areas within the project disturbance limits that contain alkali soils, primarily within the 6 acres of fill for the bridges spanning the San Jacinto River Floodplain. The Project Biologist will provide specifications in the final design regarding how existing vegetation in those areas is/is not to be removed, how deep the upper layer of the alkali soils is, and how that soil is to be removed, transported from the construction area, and deposited at a storage site or restoration area.

Prior to any site disturbance, the Project Biologist and the Resident Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to mark areas with alkali soils to ensure that those soils (approximately the upper one foot layer of the soils) are properly removed from the project limits. The RCTC Resident Engineer, working with the Project Biologist, will direct the Construction Contractor on where to take those soils (storage site or restoration area). The Project Biologist will coordinate these

activities with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

NC-7 **Commitments under the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.** As a permittee under the Western Riverside County MSHCP, RCTC has committed to a number of measures addressing impacts of the MCP project on biological resources. Those measures are documented in the *Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis* (September 2014) and the *Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis Addendum* (October 2014) provided in Appendix T in the Final EIR/EIS. RCTC will comply with the commitments in those measures throughout the design, construction, and operation of the MCP project.

NC-8 **Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plans for Western Riverside County MSHCP Compliance**. Prior to acquisition of mitigation properties for riparian/riverine resources (including least Bell's vireo), a Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan for MSHCP Riparian and Riverine Resources and any updated DBESP report specifying final mitigation site selection will be prepared and submitted to RCA, as committed to on page 49 of the Mid County Parkway MSHCP Consistency Determination Including Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (September 2014) and the Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis Addendum (October 2014) provided in Appendix T in the Final EIR/EIS. Additional Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plans and updated DBESPs will be submitted to RCA and Wildlife Agencies for NEPSSA, CASSA, Los Angeles pocket mouse (LAPM), and San Bernardino kangaroo rat (SBKR) prior to site acquisition.

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